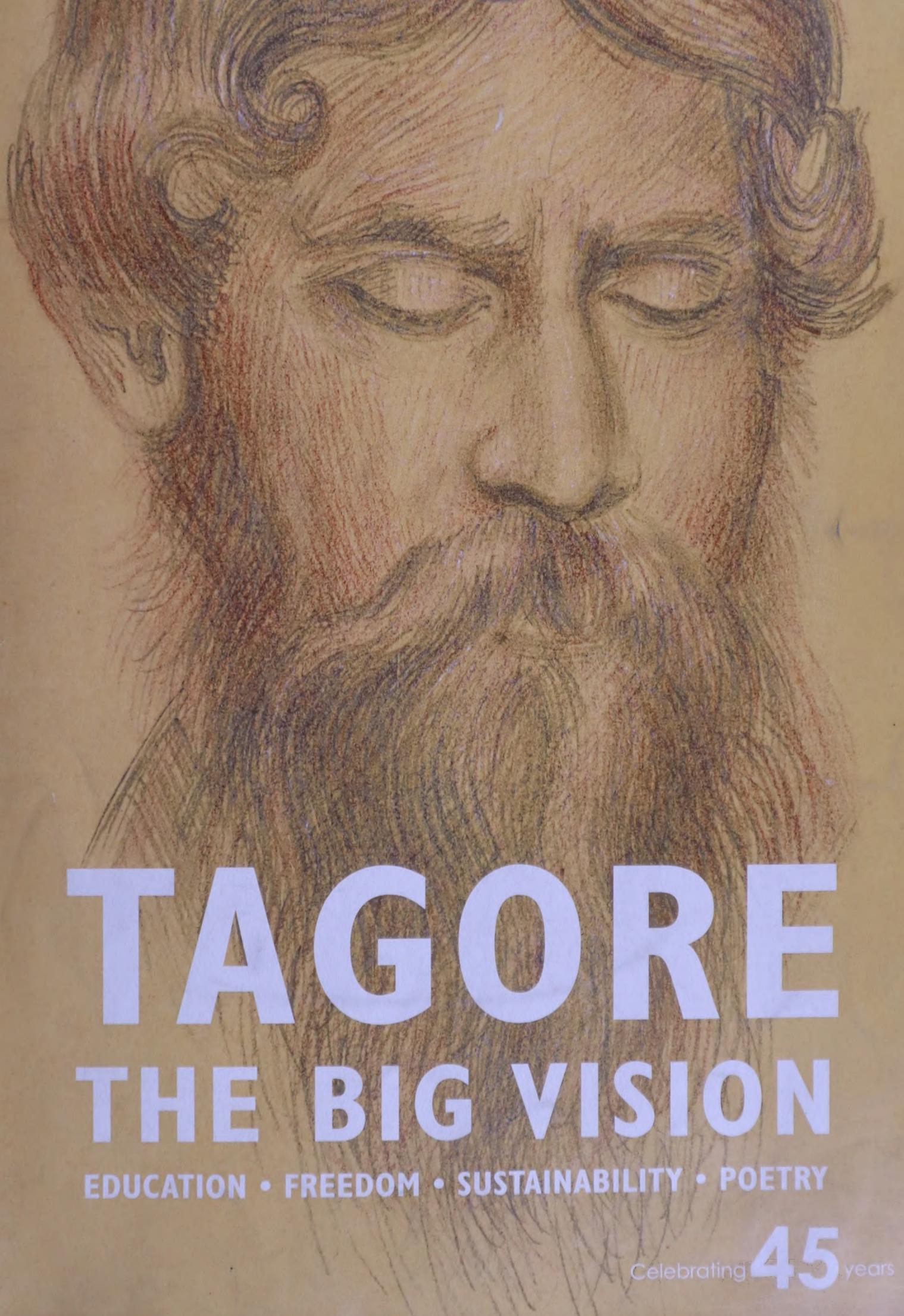


at the heart of earth, art and spirit

Resurgence

May/June 2011 No. 266

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TAGORE THE BIG VISION

EDUCATION • FREEDOM • SUSTAINABILITY • POETRY

Celebrating **45** years

“ Look to this Day;
For it is Life, the very Life of Life
In its brief course lie all the verities
And Realities of your Existence:
The Bliss of Growth,
The Glory of Action,
The Splendour of Beauty.
For Yesterday is but a Dream,
And To-morrow is only a Vision;
But To-day well-lived makes every Yesterday
a Dream of Happiness,
And every To-morrow a Vision of Hope.
Look well to this Day.”

– Rabindranath Tagore

THE WISDOM OF TAGORE

In this special issue we pay tribute to Rabindranath Tagore on the 150th anniversary of his birth and take the opportunity to acknowledge the inspiration we still get from him – an inspiration that has always been the guiding presence behind the scenes at Resurgence, but never before articulated. And we do more than that. We recognise the relevance of Tagore's wisdom for our time; we celebrate and share his ideals and aspirations of harmony, wholeness and integrity to which he dedicated his whole life, and we introduce his poetry, his plays and his paintings.

Tagore's many songs and stories inspired courage and commitment to act and transform human consciousness and can do the same today. He practised art not for art's sake, not even as a way of self-expression, least of all just for entertainment. His art was an offering to elucidate the deep meaning of life and to heal the soul. As a master of his craft, Tagore combined the purity of poetry with a purpose for living. He not only healed the sorrow and suffering which he had experienced due to death, depression and disappointment in his own life but he worked too to heal the wounds of injustice and inequality within Indian society.

For Tagore there was no point in writing if it did not lift the human spirit and restore human dignity. Like an alchemist, he turned his base emotions of anger, irritation and rage into the gold of poetry, and through his inspiring songs he transformed social inertia into hope and action. He urged us to rise above our petty identity of race, colour, religion and nation and to identify with our common humanity. He travelled tirelessly from America to Russia, from China to Argentina, proclaiming the oneness of humanity and the paramount importance of freedom, justice and peace. He inspired millions of his countrymen and women to renounce their narrow self-interest and throw away their caste prejudices in order to embrace equality, solidarity and morality. He shunned self-indulgence and worked tirelessly as a healer of social divisions. In particular he tried to heal the split between science and spirituality.

Tagore articulated perennial wisdom and timeless values in word and in action, while seeking truth through science and reason. One of his greatest

insights was to affirm that there really is no rift or conflict between reason and religion. He questioned the wisdom of restricting ourselves to one discipline or another – either to reason or religion – when we can enjoy the benefits of both. That is why he was in dialogue with the physicists Heisenberg and Einstein, whilst continuing to study the *Upanishads*. For Tagore science and spirituality were two sides of the same coin.

He worked for the outer development of human communities through improved agriculture, good schools, comfortable economic conditions, and a better standard of life, but at the same time he emphasised inner development through the renewal of the spirit, caring for the soul, nourishing the heart and nurturing the imagination.

In Tagore's vision, growth in science, technology and material wellbeing should go hand in hand with spiritual growth. One without the other is like walking on one leg. This balanced and holistic worldview is needed now more than ever, as it is a prerequisite for a sustainable and resilient future for us and for coming generations. Pure reason and pure materialism are as doomed as the pursuit of purely personal salvation. The worldview of Tagore is seeing the unity of reason and religion, spirit and matter and letting them dance together. This is the big vision where science complements spirituality, art complements ecology and freedom complements equality.

Shelley wrote, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Tagore was that. His vision has inspired Resurgence for the past 45 years. Rather than being a single-issue magazine, Resurgence has always integrated the multi faceted nature of human existence. This is why we publish poetry alongside politics, imagination alongside economics and criticism alongside creativity. While we report the actions and thoughts of the activists engaged in the care of the outer landscape, we also highlight the practice and philosophy of people engaged in the enhancement of the inner landscape.

We have been and will always be inspired by the life and work of Tagore, and we are proud to celebrate that life and its continued relevance in the pages of this special issue of the magazine.

R

Satish Kumar

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New blogs on topical issues including Nature, science, conservation and more

THE EDITORIAL TEAM IS ON TWITTER

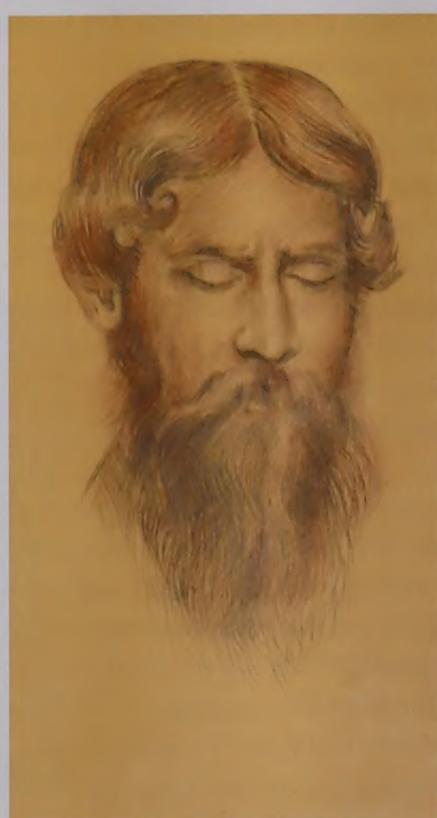
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TAGORE FESTIVAL: 1-7 MAY 2011

This special issue of Resurgence has been produced to coincide with the Tagore Festival, celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of poet, philosopher, artist and author Rabindranath Tagore
www.tagorefestival.com



Front cover:
Portrait of Rabindranath Tagore, by Sir William Rothenstein (front view), 1912
Image: The Trustees of the British Museum/
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Photo: © Yann Arthus-Bertrand/Corbis

Aerial view of village croplands, Mali

GLOBAL

WHOSE LAND IS IT ANYWAY?

Veteran environmentalist Lester Brown warns of a new age of hunger

The insidious practice of 'land grabbing' is becoming a widespread phenomenon in Africa and Asia, creating a perilous future for local people as private companies explore new ways to make profit.

For example, in Cambodia, since 2005 15% of the landmass has been signed over to private companies, a third of which are foreign. Many of the deals are shrouded in secrecy, so the scale of what is happening and who benefits is not clear; but what is apparent is that people are becoming increasingly marginalised as their land (which many cannot prove tenure of) is appropriated by government officials for sale or lease to private companies. Such large-scale land acquisition has prompted international concern for a future in which millions of hungry people are excluded from the land of their forebears by barbed-wire fences and security guards.

However, this is no longer just a fear for the future: US environmentalist Lester Brown points out in his new book, *World on the Edge*, that in 2009 Saudi Arabia received its first shipment of rice produced on land acquired in Ethiopia while at the same time the World Food Programme was providing food aid to 5 million Ethiopians. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Chinese companies have acquired 7 million hectares of land for palm-oil production whilst millions of people in DRC are dependent on international food aid.

Campaigners concerned about this trend insist that the future for African agriculture should not be one of mechanised monocultures producing crops for export, but of support for sustainable smallholder agriculture, a model pioneered by the African Biodiversity Network. This, they believe, is far more likely to ensure food security for the poorest Africans – but, sadly, this is not the motivation for land grabbers. Some deals claim to try to meet the needs of local people and bring investment to the country at the same time. For example, the Millennium Challenge Account project in Mali has invested in irrigation and training for local farmers, but this example of good practice is outweighed by the enormous anxiety in Mali about foreign 'investors' who are leasing hundreds of thousands of hectares in a country where the population is rapidly expanding and land suitable for agriculture is shrinking because of desertification.

So what can be done? Many campaigners, such as the international NGO GRAIN, work with groups in affected countries who demand accountability and transparency from their governments, but this phenomenon exposes all too starkly the powerlessness of smallholder farmers across the world. They lack the formal land rights or access to political power that would enable them to ensure that these deals worked in their interests too. Instead, it seems the future of their children is being sold over their heads.

R

www.landcoalition.org www.grain.org

THE HOME FARM PROJECT

An alternative future for African agriculture

The previous article (left) exposes what can happen when land is extorted from common ownership to private hands – but in parts of rural Gambia the opposite is happening. Young people are returning to their ancestral lands to recreate the lifestyle of their forebears, after the glamorous lure of life in the coastal tourist hotspots loses its appeal. However, with the visionary help of UK permaculturalist Sandy Martin, whose charity oversees the Home Farm projects, these young people are not just subsisting but they are creating flourishing organic gardens and selling excess produce to towns where previously they could find no work.

Using permaculture principles, Sandy helps these groups of young men to reclaim and redesign their ancestral gardens. The key is the provision of certain tools (but no money) to enable them to irrigate their land – so water-pump technology, water tanks and training in techniques of water conservation and mulching create the fertile ground from which indigenous food crops are grown in abundance. Once the gardens are established they provide year-round food for families and the wider community and reconnect young people to the homes that many left years before in the search for the good life that tourism seemingly offered.

Sandy has calculated that it takes £5,000 to establish a community Home Farm – but after the initial expenditure on solar and water-pump technology, tools, seeds and equipment, the farms are self-sustaining. It is a model the charity would like to see replicated throughout Africa as it offers not just nutritious organic food but hope to whole communities, who see the return of their prodigal sons and consequently the deepening of societal connections. Not least, if communities were facilitated to reconnect with their ancestral lands in this way and to create intercommunity networks for shared learning and dialogue, it would be much more difficult for foreign corporations to appropriate their land.

www.africaorganics.org



Photo: courtesy Home Farm Project

THE TREE OF LIFE FOREST

Germinating hope in Haiti



Photo: courtesy Jack Haime/BioPlanet USA

With the recent news that 2010 saw yet another devastating drought in the Amazon rainforest – only five years after the previous ‘once in a lifetime’ drought – where rivers dried up completely, fish and other species perished and the Amazon became a net emitter of carbon dioxide because of the sheer number of dying trees, it is an ecological imperative to support tree-planting initiatives throughout the globe. One such project caught my eye because it offers multiple solutions to the problems facing the people of Haiti.

Well over a year after the devastating earthquake that struck the region, communities are still living in temporary accommodation and are subject to food and water shortages. However, BioPlanet U.S.A. has launched its Reforesting Haiti project with the initial aim of planting 310,000 trees – one for every life lost in the earthquake. With the approval of Port-au-Prince Mayor Muscadin Jean-Yves Jason, selected areas around the capital city will be planted with the widely grown tree *Moringa oleifera*, which has amazing properties: it grows rapidly, it is leguminous and therefore improves soil fertility and stability, and its leaves are highly nutritious for animal fodder and can also be made into a food supplement for humans and even into an organic spray that enhances crop growth.

BioPlanet has already helped to establish a similar initiative in Mexico and uses a model of community development and participation so that micro-businesses can be set up to sustainably harvest and manufacture forest products, thereby rebuilding livelihoods and improving health in these fragile environments.

BioPlanet has devised various ways in which the global community can contribute to this reforestation project: individuals can ‘sponsor a seedling’, and community groups or businesses can purchase seeds that are then given to children of local schools in Haiti (and also Miami) to germinate and care for until they are ready to be planted out, thereby contributing to important lessons in ecological education and giving the children a stake in the future of the forest.

www.bioplanetusa.org

LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

Litter is a matter of bad design

A recent Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) report has disclosed that the UK spends over £858 million a year clearing up litter, but as cuts to public services slice through the fabric of society, it is possible that doing so may soon become too costly. Our landscapes are in danger of becoming eternally blighted.

Ironically, it is an American writer – Bill Bryson – who is intent on alerting us to our folly. As President of CPRE, not only has he spearheaded its own Stop the Drop anti-littering campaign, but he's also backing the UK government's new Love Where You Live initiative to try and reduce littering. Taking a well-aimed pop at the drinks industry for not implementing a bottle deposit scheme – which, it has been proven, would significantly reduce one of the key sources of litter – Bryson asked, "What sensible nation would not want to capture and recycle its precious and

finite resources? What discerning people would not want to enjoy a litter-free environment?" Quite.

But the Love Where You Live campaign seems to be fundamentally

a case of cynical 'greenwash' if ever there was one.

One of the stated aims of the campaign is "to make it easier for us not to drop packaging" – but wouldn't it be better

"What sensible nation would not want to capture and recycle its precious and finite resources? What discerning people would not want to enjoy a litter-free environment?"

– Bill Bryson

flawed. Keep Britain Tidy ambassador Kirstie Allsopp said, "Being part of Love Where You Live is a chance for the big brands to become the heroes instead of the villains in the fight against litter." So it seems that McDonald's, Coca-Cola, Wrigley et al are going to tell us all to dispose of their unsustainable, badly designed packaging carefully:

if the packaging itself were so well designed that if it were dropped, the environmental impact would be nil?

Until these brands take responsibility for the waste they produce, and redesign, recover and reuse it, litter will simply not go away.

www.cpre.org.uk

RETHINKING THE AGE OF STUPID

Cinema for social change

Franny Armstrong's film *The Age of Stupid* was quite rightly hailed as a wake-up call for humanity – yet it portrayed a future dystopia where it was too late to redress the issues of climate change and environmental injustice. A new, animated film in the making – *Odyssey 2050* – is a natural successor to *The Age of Stupid*, addressing as it does the same issues, but it is aimed at young people and, crucially, it offers them a chance to rewrite the future: to contribute scripts, characters, music and animation and so help create a more optimistic prospect for planet Earth.

Young people played no part in the problems they are faced with, but they will have a key role in envisioning the solutions, and it is hoped this film will give children a creative outlet for their ideas. Project Founder Bruce Callow comments, "In the global climate change debate there is a huge segment of the world's population that is not being sufficiently taken into account – the children of the world. The mission of *Odyssey 2050* is to provide an exciting and interactive platform for young people everywhere to get involved in the fight against climate change and have fun while doing it."

Thelvin Cabezas, visual effects artist on the *Superman Returns* and *Avatar* films, who is advising the *Odyssey 2050* project, says, "I know first-hand the huge impact and influence cinema has on social change, but to my frustration, many movies or short films these days have an empty message or no message at all. *Odyssey 2050* changes this and uses a hugely



Still: *Odyssey 2050*

influential medium to communicate a serious issue that we should all be involved in."

So if you know any creative young people whose vision for the future is contrary to the 'Stupid' message that it's already too late, then tell them about this film and encourage them to convey their story to the wider world.

www.odyssey2050themovie.org

GLOBAL

IT'S COOL TO BE KIND



Photo: © hwahl/iStockphoto.com

Creating a chain reaction of generosity

Kindness is a fundamental part of what makes life worth living. It is something most of us have experienced and it gives us hope for humanity: the person who risks their own life to save that of another; neighbours who get the weekly shopping for their elderly friends; the volunteers who give up their spare time to help the less able in society. Yet in our schools kindness has somehow become synonymous with weakness – it's not cool to be nice.

Now a Kent-based organisation called People United is working in primary schools to show that a simple and imaginative focus on kindness can have hugely positive effects on pupils, staff and the whole school community – and research shows that these effects last well after the project has finished, creating a chain reaction of generosity. Celebrating kindness and acknowledging the inherent goodness in each other creates a happy school environment, and it has been proven that children are more receptive to learning when they are happy.

We all do good things, and children are encouraged to exchange stories about the good things they have done – no matter how small – in the classroom setting, so that they learn to value being kind. “I help people in the playground,” said one young boy,

whilst another said, “I made a get-well card for Mrs Wood.”

The project culminates in a Kindness Week, where specific acts of kindness are undertaken such as making cards for people in a local hospital, baking gingerbread biscuits and giving them to people in the park, or creating a Kindness Quilt as a present for a neighbouring school. Being kind to the planet is also part of the programme, so planting native wild flowers and clearing rubbish in local woods are on the agenda too. “If I had to choose the best bit, it would be all of it!” said one young participant.

People United has worked out many good ways of integrating the Kindness project into the curriculum so that positive values such as social responsibility, fairness and equity, empathy and social identity can be part of everyday life in schools. In the words of Dominic Abrams, Professor of Psychology at the University of Kent, “This is vital work. People United uses scientific evidence about what motivates altruism and positive social behaviour to guide practical and creative solutions in situations that really matter to people.”

Now it really is cool to be kind.

www.peopleunited.org.uk

Lorna Howarth is Development Director of Artists Project Earth (www.apeuk.org)

Universal Tagore

Tagore's greatest wish was to introduce Westerners to the true ancient spirit of India, writes **Mark Tully**

Tagore didn't draw a facile line between East and West. He didn't paint a black and white picture; and in her introduction to her translation of selected Tagore poems, Ketaki Kushari Dyson points out that he was "always deeply appreciative of the solid achievements of the West" although critical of its "mechanist approach to reality". At the same time he was aware of those elements in India's heritage that also needed to be changed.

Tagore's universalism is the theme that runs through this anniversary edition of *Resurgence*. It is in stark contrast, of course, to the barren economic globalisation we hear so much about today – Thomas Friedman's Flat Earth and the idea that we all now live in one village.

As Ursula King points out in her article exploring the ongoing influence of Tagore on Dartington, "Tagore's vision embraced a large-scale universalism, most unusual in his lifetime given the political context of colonialism. His vision moved to ever-larger circles, from India to Asia, to the world." And in his vision of "right education" Tagore himself says: "I go from door to door, from country to country urging people to come close to each other, because it is from the meeting of hearts, through the meeting of souls, that great streams of truth will flow."

Tagore's vision included the universal mind that he discussed with Einstein. In their commentary on this conversation Andrew Robinson and Dipankar Home tell us that Tagore accepted the idea of a universal mind that controlled Nature and quote him as saying "the Universe is like a cobweb and minds are the spiders; for mind is one as well as many".

In these special features dedicated to exploring the life, work and ongoing relevance of Tagore, we are introduced to the poet's universal *Jiban-debata*. William Radice explains that this can be translated

literally as 'life-deity'. Whilst acknowledging that it's not easy to explain precisely what this meant to Tagore, he describes the *Jiban-debata* as "a kind of 'tapping into' the creative forces of the universe as a whole".

There are still, I believe, two common misunderstandings about the spirit of India. One suggests that it is an unworldly place and not concerned with material matters such as the eradication of poverty; but Reba Som, in her article on Tagore's achievements in agriculture, makes it clear that this was not so in his case. And in writing about Tagore's poetry, Deepak Chopra stresses the worldliness of his spirituality, saying: "To be so deeply religious and yet to include the everyday feelings that we all have is his unique gift."

There is also a misconception that the spirit of India is not concerned with morality; yet Ursula King reminds us that the last words of Tagore's final testament were this Sanskrit quotation: "By unrighteousness man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root."

So in this very special edition of *Resurgence* we learn more of Tagore the universalist and see just how relevant his legacy remains today – not just his poetry, prose, painting and music but also his practical achievements in education and agriculture.

Were Tagore alive today he would admire the amazing achievements of science and technology in our lifetimes, but I think he would remind us of his words quoted in the pages you are about to read: "The world is constituted of facts, that may themselves constitute new discoveries to the explorer and illustrate new laws to the scientist, but never their significance – a significance which can only be comprehended through our spiritual vision." R

Mark Tully is a speaker at the Tagore Festival.

Right: Rabindranath Tagore

Photo: Auguste Léon/Département des Hauts-de-Seine, Musée Albert-Kahn



Who Was Rabindranath Tagore?

Rabindranath Tagore wrote poetry throughout his life, but he did an amazing number of other things as well. His long life is as densely packed with growth and self-renewal as a tropical rainforest, and his achievements are outstanding, writes Ketaki Kushari Dyson

As a writer, Tagore was a relentless experimenter and innovator and enriched every genre. Besides poetry, he wrote songs (both the words and the melodies), short stories, novels, plays (in both prose and verse), essays on a wide range of topics including literary criticism, polemical writings, travelogues, memoirs, personal letters that were effectively *belles-lettres*, and books for children.

Apart from a few books containing lectures given abroad and personal letters to friends who did not read Bengali, the bulk of his voluminous literary output is in Bengali, and is a monumental heritage for those who speak the language. Like the other languages of Northern India, Bengali belongs to the Indo-European family. A cousin to most modern European languages and sharing with them certain basic linguistic patterns and numerous cognate words, it is spoken by an estimated 170-175 million people in India and Bangladesh.

When Tagore began his literary career, Bengali literature and the language in which it was written had together begun a joint leap into modernity, the most illustrious among his immediate predecessors being Michael Madhusudan Datta (1824-73) in verse and Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1838-94) in prose.

By the time of Tagore's death in 1941, Bengali had become a supple modern language with a rich body of literature. Tagore's personal contribution to this development was immense. The Bengali that is written today owes him an enormous debt.

Throughout his life, Tagore maintained a strong connection with the performance arts. He created his very own genre of dance drama, a unique mixture of dance, drama and song. He not only wrote plays but also directed and produced them, and even acted in them. He composed some 2,000 songs but was also a fine tenor singer. Not only was he a prolific poet, but he could read his poetry out to large audiences, very effectively. Many of his contemporaries have attested that to hear him recite his own verses was akin to a musical experience. Leoš Janáček had this experience in Prague and was so impressed and inspired that he wrote a choral work, *The Wandering Madman* (1922), based on Tagore's poem *The Gardener*. Another contemporary, Alexander Zemlinsky, also based his *Lyric Symphony* (1923) on a set of Tagore poems.

In the seventh decade of his life, Tagore started to draw and paint seriously. He left a substantial output in this field and is acknowledged to be one of India's most important modern artists.

Tagore was a notable pioneer in education. A rebel against formal education in his youth, he tried to give shape to some of his own educational ideas in the school he founded in 1901 at Santiniketan, near Bolpur (in the district of Birbhum, West Bengal). The importance he gave to creative self-expression in the development of young minds will be familiar to progressive schools everywhere nowadays, but it was a new and radical idea when he introduced it in his school. The welfare of children remained close to his heart to the end of his days.

To his school he added a university, Visva-Bharati, formally instituted in 1921. He wanted this university to become an international meeting-place of minds, "where the world becomes one nest", and he invited scholars from both East and West to come and enrich its life. Under his patronage, the Santiniketan campus became a significant centre of Buddhist studies and a haven for artists and musicians. It was here that the art of batik printing, brought over from its Indonesian homeland, was naturalised in India.

Through his work on the family estates, Tagore became



Rabindranath Tagore with accompaniment

Photo: courtesy Rabindra-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati

familiar with the deep-rooted problems of the rural poor, and he initiated projects for community development at Shilaidaha and Potisar, the headquarters of the estates. At Potisar, he started an agricultural bank, in which he later invested the money from his Nobel Prize, so that his school could have an annual income while the peasants could have loans at low rates of interest.

He had his son Rathindranath trained in agricultural science in Illinois; and in the village of Surul, renamed Sriniketan, adjacent to Santiniketan, he started an Institute of Rural Reconstruction with the help of a Cornell-trained English agricultural expert, Leonard Elmhirst. The kind of work that was begun there has been repeated and elaborated in many programmes of self-help in India. For instance, Sriniketan pioneered the manufacture of handcrafted leather purses and handbags, a cottage industry that has, since then, taken off elsewhere as well and now exports products to many parts of the world.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the Santiniketan-Sriniketan complex became an important cultural institution in 20th-century India. Tagore's friend Elmhirst went on to give shape to an educational institution of his own at Dartington Hall in the UK and always acknowledged the inspiration he received from Tagore.

Though Tagore was not a systematic philosopher, he is of considerable contemporary relevance as a thinker: one of those farseeing individuals whose ideas show us the way forward in the modern world and who are going to gain importance as time passes. Those who are interested in 'deep ecology' should find him a very congenial thinker. A 'green' to his core long before the term was coined, he was what is nowadays called a holistic thinker, never forgetting the whole even when concentrating on the parts.

His Upanishadic background made him constantly aware of the interconnectedness of all things in the cosmos. He saw human beings as part of the universe, not set apart from it, and he knew that the human species must live in harmony with its natural environment. An outspoken critic of colonialism, he was in favour of international cooperation – genuine cooperation, not one country exploiting another in the name of cooperation.

Always deeply appreciative of the solid achievements of the West, Tagore nonetheless criticised it for its fragmented, mechanistic approach to reality and its scheme of values, which overrated material power and underrated other human assets. Likewise, he was acutely aware of the limitations of merely traditionalist thinking in his own country. Although he went through a phase of looking back at India's past glories, he was never fatuous about it and quickly outgrew any attitude that was purely and ritually nostalgic.

No one could be more aware of the elements in India's heritage that needed to be cherished and preserved, but at the same time Tagore knew that many things had to be changed. Some of his most powerful satirical writings are directed against those who oppose necessary change. He knew that political independence alone was not an adequate goal for his country, but that the real task lay at

He saw human beings as part of the universe, and he knew that the human species must live in harmony with its natural environment

grassroots level: of transforming and energising the rural masses through education and self-help programmes. He welcomed modernisation in many areas of life. For example, he supported



Rabindranath Tagore with Tan Yun-Shan and family, China Photo: courtesy Rabindra-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati

artificial contraception, which Gandhi opposed.

Tagore was a great champion of the individual. In his fictional work, he often portrays the thinking, conscientious, lonely individual, alienated from the unthinking and dogmatic group and liable to be persecuted by it. The vulnerable individual is often the focus of his attention in poetry too. He was acutely aware of the oppression of women and looked forward to the coming of an epoch when men and women would be equal partners.

Tagore's thinking mind and the times in which he lived inevitably involved him in political gestures. At home, he wrote songs that protested against Curzon's partition of Bengal; returned his knighthood after the Amritsar massacre; spoke out against terrorism as a political strategy, to the displeasure of those who favoured it; and criticised aspects of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and engaged in dialogues and debates with him. These activities made him an all-India figure and won him the admiration of both Gandhi and Nehru.

Abroad, Tagore exposed the horrific dangers of competitive, aggressive nationalism in a series of lectures (*Nationalism*, 1917), to the annoyance of Britain, the USA and Japan. He was fully aware of the pressing need to oppose fascism (see his poem *Prantik*), and he died profoundly saddened by the way in which the world was hurtling towards another major war; but he never lost his faith in humanity. Some of his poems are

known to have inspired conscientious objectors in Britain during the Second World War. He died before the full horrors of Nazism became common knowledge and before the partition of his native land.

The high standard of Tagore's achievements in a diversity of fields assures his pre-eminent position within the Bengali cultural tradition. In that context, he is still very much alive, a focal point of lively debates and controversies. Fortunately for the Bengali literary scene, a generation of writers who regarded themselves as post-Tagoreans established themselves in the 1930s, during Tagore's lifetime, so there was no literary vacuum after his death. On the contrary, there were enough writers to take Bengali writing successfully forward from the point where he left it, and the two decades after his death were remarkably fruitful, despite the lacerations that Bengal underwent in 1947.

Tagore was a pioneer in so many fields that he has become a natural point of reference. If people go away from him in search of something they cannot find in him, they tend to come back to him for something that they cannot easily find anywhere else.

The extreme revolutionary left, as represented by the Naxalite movement of the late sixties and early seventies, did indeed reject Tagore, as it rejected other leaders of the Indian Renaissance, but that extremism of attitude discredited itself. In the eastern wing of Bengal, Tagore played a crucial role in the self-definition of the people after partition. After the region became part of Pakistan, a propaganda war was launched to belittle Tagore by portraying him as belonging to Hindus only and not of any relevance to Muslims. This sectarian view was rejected by a regional elite who were becoming increasingly secularised, who derived inspiration from Tagore during their struggle for political independence from Pakistan and who managed to rally the people round his memory as a symbol of their identity as Bengalis. This act of recognition was sealed by the adoption of one of his patriotic songs as the national anthem of the new state of Bangladesh. (The Indian national anthem is also a composition of Tagore's.)

But Tagore does not belong to the Bengalis or the Indians only. Many of the Bengali post-Tagoreans rebelled against

him, finding him lacking in the ennui, grotesquery and sense of alienation of Western-style modernism. He was too whole, not cracked or fragmented enough, not in love with sickness or despair. For the thrills he could not provide they went to Baudelaire or Rimbaud, Proust or Kafka, phases of Eliot or Brecht.

Now a generation of Westerners themselves have emerged who turn with relief from the negative features of Western modernism to holistic perspectives, to qualities such as compassion and affirmation, nurturing and the making of connections: qualities for a long time despised as feminine, but now reinvested with value by the women's movement. To such an audience Tagore's poetry should prove attractive. It is characterised by an impressive wholeness of attitude: a loving warmth, a compassionate humanity, a delicate sensuousness, an intense sense of kinship with Nature, a burning awareness of the universe of which we are part.

In the paragraphs above, I have deliberately not included the Nobel Prize in Literature, awarded to Tagore in 1913, among his principle achievements. That award is a cultural institution of the Western world that has hardly any meaning in the context of Indian literature. An accidental concatenation of circumstances led to Tagore's being given the award – more, one suspects, as a symbolic recognition of the reawakening of an old civilisation under the aegis of the British Empire than as anything else, for no other writer from the Indian subcontinent has been awarded the prize since that time. If some take this to mean that no other major author has appeared in that part of the world since 1913, they will be deceiving themselves. All it means is that because of the politics of culture the major writers in the modern languages of the subcontinent do not get translated for the Western markets and are 'invisible' in the West. And in 1913, there were even protests in certain papers in the USA and Canada against the fact that an Asian, a non-white, a Hindu, a man whose name was difficult for Westerners to pronounce, should have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature!

Yet the Nobel Prize was definitely a landmark in Tagore's life. It made him internationally famous. He reached a worldwide audience, received invitations from many countries, travelled and lectured widely, acquired foreign friends and, thanks to his fame, met with many of the other distinguished personalities of his time.

There was a substantial widening of his artistic and political experiences. He saw the passion play at Oberammergau, heard *La Traviata* at La Scala, in Milan, saw the art of China and Japan as well as modern Europe, and watched the dance dramas of Indonesia; he witnessed the devastated state of Europe after the First World War (which saddened him) and the Communist efforts to uplift the

masses in Russia (which stirred him profoundly). His foreign travels enriched and sharpened the elements of cosmopolitan humanism in his thinking and made him strongly anti-war.

Seeing that he had gained a large audience, Tagore also tried, in the lectures he was invited to give, to use his influence for a good cause. There is a game that the West plays with men from the East: first craving gurus, then criticising them for preaching like gurus. Tagore could not escape this fate, half-seeing what was happening, yet reluctant to miss the opportunities for bridge-building that the encounters with foreigners afforded.

His insistence that intelligent cooperation between nations was saner than the path of unbridled competition is just as relevant today as it was in his lifetime

It is true that he sometimes spoke like an angry prophet, but he was absolutely sincere. Angry prophets make us uncomfortable because they speak the truth and disturb our complacency.

Tagore's analyses of contemporary problems were radical and penetrating. His indictment of violence and commercial greed, his insistence that intelligent cooperation between nations was saner than the path of unbridled competition are just as relevant today as they were in his lifetime, if not more so.

The Nobel Prize is thus of importance in Tagore's vita, not as an index of his literary merit, but because it invested his life with a new international dimension, and in that way helped him to modernise and radicalise himself at a faster rate than was possible without it. R

This is an edited extract from *I Won't Let You Go: Selected Poems by Rabindranath Tagore*, a second and expanded edition translated by Ketaki Kushari Dyson and published in 2010 by Bloodaxe Books. ISBN: 9781852248987



Tagore teaching at Santiniketan

Photo: courtesy Rabindra-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati

We Are All Related



Dhyanam II, 2005, pure pigment on canvas, by Natvar Bhavsar

Image courtesy Sundaram Tagore Gallery www.sundaramtagore.com

For humanity, the perfect
relationship is one of love

The 'Unity of Life' underpins the diversity of all existence, wrote Rabindranath Tagore

The thoughts and sentiments I express in my writings have their philosophical foundation, but I lack the training of the professional philosopher. In India, philosophy infects the very atmosphere we breathe.

Quite unconsciously, I shape all my thoughts and my life on the philosophical teachings of the Upanishads. I can therefore only discuss with you what I consider to be the central idea in our own religion.

The idea is that truth implies unity, a unity expressed through many and varied manifestations, a unity which, when we are able to realise it, gives us freedom. To a man ignorant of a foreign language, the literature contained in it appears to be a stupendous jumble of words, and the speech mere sounds that confuse the mind. When he learns and understands the language, he is freed from the bondage of his ignorance.

Likewise, a path is a meaningless division on a farm unless we understand that, although at first glance it divides, in reality it connects the farm with our neighbour.

When we regard our self as the sole and final end, we separate the self from the great life of the world. As soon as we admit that the self must establish a harmonious relationship with the all, then for the first time, we realise what the word 'freedom' means.

Until a poem reveals to us that unity of perfection that permeates the words and the grammar and transcends them, we find no joy in it. The world is like that poem: it is constituted of facts that may themselves constitute new discoveries to the explorer and illustrate new laws to the scientist, but never their significance – a significance which can only be comprehended through our spiritual vision.

Because this truth of perfect interrelation goes far beyond mere facts or the contents of the poem, it carries us instantly across them, making us free, like the beauty of a rose that takes no time in leading our minds beyond the innumerable physical facts of that flower to its ineffable harmony.

We have, in the *Upanishads*, the great saying
Only he knows the truth
who realises himself in all beings
and all other beings in himself

Let us try to understand this saying, for in understanding it we shall come to a truth which, as I said, lies at the basis of all we call civilisation. An individual who succeeds in dissociating himself from his fellows may imagine that thereby he attains real freedom. But we know from our experience in history that this is not a fact, and that where people live under the compulsion of fear of their neighbours, they cannot attain their full humanity.

Only those who can cultivate a feeling of sympathy with others, of understanding and of cooperation, achieve that relationship which is a great deal more than the numerical fact of their all being on this Earth together. Civilisation, itself the fruit of inter-communication, and of escape from the dungeons of obscurity, is producer of the arts, of literature, of religion and of ethics, all of which can embody external values.

They will never emerge from that kind of crowd which only represents an unrelated or imperfectly related number of people. The best and highest type of society is one that is forever active in trying to solve the problem of mutual relationship. Only thereby can wider areas of freedom for its members be acquired.

For humanity, the perfect relationship is one of love. This truth has itself been the foundation of the teaching of the Buddha. According to him, we can only reach our freedom through cultivating a mutual sympathy. To gain this freedom we need to liberate ourselves from the fetters of self and from all those passions that tend to be exclusive. It is this liberating principle that we must apply to an imprisoned world.

What we call 'progress' does not necessarily conform with this ideal. With a purely material progress the greed for things tends to become a passion, thereby promoting unbridled competition and conflict. A reign of ugliness spreads like a callus over the whole world.

A mere addition to the height of skyscrapers or to the velocity of speed can lead only to a savage orgy of boasting and exaggeration. Along this road, the human spirit will be vanquished by the demon of senseless accumulation, and will remain the perpetual victim of a moral slavery.

R

From a talk Tagore gave in Argentina in 1924.

The Great Truth

In a talk given in Shanghai, **Rabindranath Tagore** shared his vision of 'right' education

Tis going against my grain to go about from door to door, country to country carrying my message. It is not the kind of work I am accustomed to. I work in the solitude and in the depth of my silence. But I did feel the call of the humans: I felt it every day, more and more.

I came out of my solitude and gave up most of my literary work in which I was engaged at that time – I came out and brought together a few students. I wanted to help these students. What was my idea? It was that education that prevails in this world is utterly wrong.

I have no doubt that some human beings will find out that they have been going against Nature when they are made to learn their lessons, while they are not in the heart of Nature. The minds of children are tortured because the adults, the school masters, have their own ideas of teaching and the subjects they choose and they force these things upon these young children who are helpless and have had no chance of escaping from the tyranny of these school masters.

Nature has provided children with a great fund of restlessness. They grow up, they run about and through this energy of restlessness they knock their minds against information, against facts, against lessons. They come with all their force and all their mind and bounce against the facts of the world. The shock impresses these facts upon their minds. They gain a great deal of knowledge and information from these experiences of utter freedom in the heart of Nature. But these poor creatures who love life, who love light, who love freedom, who love their mothers and who love their own people, are all driven to a place where their minds have been tortured to keep still.

Why should they keep still? They are asked not to move, not to be loud in their talk, not to move their hands and feet. But why shouldn't they move their hands and feet? It is Nature's own bidding which makes them move their hands and feet. This great world of freedom is all set aside, and instead they are put in this ugly school building with white walls staring them in the face; no colour, no forms, no beauty and no association of life. This cannot be right for children to be forced to accept this life of torture.

I was certain that children had to have their lessons in an atmosphere of freedom and in the bosom of Mother Nature herself. Their schooling will come from the sky, from the clouds, from the rustling leaves, from all the facts of life that come to them

unasked and unbidden. With their restless curiosity they will find for themselves their own facts. Gradually their minds will be rested – but this is utterly neglected. They lose their creative faculty from their infancy. Their masters say, "You do this," while children have their ideas of doing something else. They are wishing and longing to do something that impels them.

Don't you know that it is the most important of all the gifts that a child derives from the world – this gift of creativity? It is the imagination that works to make something of its own. But the master says, "No, don't do that or this, be still and quiet and behave like an adult." The children are made to forget that they are children.

The educational system which has been prevalent in the world is causing us to lose great gifts of true knowledge. A great number of individuals are modelled into an average type



Teaching outside at Santiniketan, present day

of standardised education which helps them to become clerks in some government office, but it does not help them find their own personality or their own soul. This education utterly kills their own sense of their personality and the reasons of their existence which gives them their freedom. I said, I would give them freedom. In my school I offered them that freedom.

I give children as much freedom as possible. This freedom has saved many of them from institutions, and many boys are saved from 'going wrong'. I came out with this love of freedom. And what happened to me when I was in the company of these children? I discovered the eternal child which dwells in every human being.

I was certain children should have their lessons in the bosom of Mother Nature herself

The child has the creative gift and wants to build his own world. The child has the eternal spirit of growth. When I came in touch with the children, I found the child within me.

When I was 40 years old, I began to grow. I am still growing and have not come to the end of it. Lessons come to us as daily surprises. They come to us in our joys, our sorrows, our games, and when they come upon us as great surprises, then we are thoroughly roused.

All lessons should come like surprises. But our educational institutions lose that spirit of surprise and wonder; its every subject is fixed, the hour is fixed, the teacher is fixed. The poor child has to suffer the monotony of this dead education which is imposed on them. And the cry of the children comes to me – they say "Poet, can you save us? You have faith in child life, you love children – save us."

What is freedom? Freedom is the perfect relationship between our fellow beings. When the perfect relationship is established, then we gain freedom. It is with the freedom of perfect relationship that we come close to each other. If I had come to you and if you were not kindly to me, then I would be like a prisoner. The little kindness you show me offers me freedom.

But everywhere, this is thwarted, and the whole world is suffering. I said to myself: "This is not the time for you to remain in your solitude – come out." Though I am weak, I am old and I have no strength of the young, I have the confidence of the young.

The cry of the age has come to me. I go from door to door, from country to country urging people to come close to each other, because it is from the meeting of hearts, through the meeting of souls, of ideals, that great streams of truth will flow.

I felt that no one would come to my help, that I must walk alone. So, I go from country to country, carrying this cause of truth. When I meet with people who are not intent on profit making and who still have the freshness of faith in their minds, I feel rested.

I am glad to say that in my wanderings I did meet people who have the enthusiasm for idealism. Therefore do not deal with truth with mere curiosity, with superficial curiosity, but with deep enthusiasm which truth claims from us. Do not deal with truth in that supercilious manner of patronage. Do not be proud of your gifts; try to bow your head down when the message does come – forget your narrow self and bring out your best.

I know there are very few people who will accept this ideal. I have the call of the great truth which has been given to me, and I have come to offer this before you. If you accept, you help me, my friends. If not – well, I go my own way, alone. R

This is an edited extract from a talk first published in the North China Daily News in Shanghai and originally given in the home of the Kduri family in 1923.

Photo: Samiran Nandy/<http://santiniketanphoto.jimdo.com>

In the Field

With his fame resting largely on his literary legacy, it is often forgotten that Tagore's work in rural development was pioneering too, says **Reba Som**

When Rabindranath Tagore returned to Calcutta from England in 1880 without becoming the barrister that his father had sent him out to be, he was still unsure about his larger purpose in life. He knew his family regarded him as a "gifted wastrel" and accepted he was not cut out for a profession. But little did he imagine that his father's decision to send him in 1890 to look after ancestral estates in rural Bengal would become the defining moment in his life.

Gaining first-hand experience of village life, Tagore despaired over the servile mentality and despondency he saw. As a landowner, he felt thoroughly ashamed at his preoccupation with revenue collection and resolved that he had a personal obligation to the villages.

Initially, he had felt that the onus for change in the villages lay on zamindars, or landowners, traditionally custodians of village improvement. However, over time he realised that the zamindars were becoming city-bound and so change would have to come from the villagers themselves, which meant understanding them better.

Tagore recalled, for example, how his proposal to build a well using village labour had been (surprisingly) rejected because the villagers felt that, rather than their receiving recognition for their manual labour, it would be the landowners who would gain merit for granting the water. He realised then how the poor felt they were entitled to the gratitude of the rich.

Deciding on a rural intervention of his own, Tagore purchased a 20-acre property in the village of Surul (and close to his school at Santiniketan), which he dreamt could become the nucleus of a rural reconstruction centre. His son Rathindranath, who had trained in agricultural sciences in the USA, would take the lead along with a few others. However, rampant malaria made Surul unfit for habitation.

Tagore then turned instead to his ancestral estates in East Bengal, where there was already a nucleus for rural work with an agricultural bank, a primary school and a system for settling disputes through arbitration. Realising that he needed more volunteers, he delivered a series of lectures, all aimed at the young

people and reminding them there are two types of education: one skyward, with book learning, and the other at grassroots level. Among those assembled was a young man of 26 named Atul Sen. Headmaster of a high school, (and my maternal grandfather), he, like so many of his generation, had been attracted by the revolutionary movement against the British Raj.

In trouble with the police for sheltering the revolutionary hero Bagha Jatin, Sen responded to Tagore's clarion call. He resigned his job and became the leader of a dedicated band of workers operating from three centres at Tagore's estates in Kaligram province. The programme, as laid down by the poet, incorporated literacy, hygiene (with an emphasis on the importance of clean drinking water), infant mortality and disease (including malaria), and disaster relief. Each of the three centres opened a hospital and dispensary, with free medicines, doctors and a few beds, and the project was deemed an unprecedented success.

Education was always a priority for Tagore, who believed that caste divisions, religious conflicts, aversion to work and even precarious economic conditions could all be blamed on an absence of education, and in a relatively short space of time the total number of primary schools in the estate exceeded 200 (including night schools for the elderly).

Lessons in history and geography, updates on global news, advice on first aid, agricultural improvement and disaster management all figured in the programmes. Public works involving sinking wells, constructing roads and jungle clearance called for extra finances, and Atul Sen hit upon a novel scheme whereby tenants made contributions through labour or a monetary equivalent.

Rural indebtedness – a serious problem – was tackled by granting loans at 9% interest direct from the estate's agricultural bank, with the credit requirements of the cultivators being carefully assessed by Sen and his band of workers to prevent reckless borrowing. The advances were mostly utilised for crop raising, and loan repayments only commenced after assessing the final crop.

The principle of settling all local quarrels by





New Clouds by Nandalal Bose, 1937
Image: courtesy National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi

arbitration without appeal to the court was welcomed by Hindus and Muslims alike, since it saved them the time and expense of going to the law courts. Official records show that between 1915 and 1916, not a single case went to court.

In 1916, a report in the Bengal District Gazette declared: "It must not be imagined that a powerful landlord is always oppressive and uncharitable. A striking instance to the contrary is given in the Settlement Officer's account of the estate of Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali poet whose fame is worldwide. It is clear that to poetical genius he adds practical and beneficial ideas of estate management which should be an example to local zamindars."

Tagore's dream was slowly coming true. He had candidly declared that we cannot be preoccupied with the problems of all India. However, we could make a difference by adopting one or two villages. These would then constitute the India that mattered.

Tagore's biographer Krishna Kripalani wrote: "For Rabindranath the two

experiments, pedagogic and agricultural, cultural and rural, were vitally linked. What he tried to work out, at Santiniketan and at Surul, was an integrated programme in which culture of the mind and culture of the soil went hand in hand."

And Sudhir Sen, the late Indian economist who specialised in agricultural development and rural electrification, wrote: "Tagore was the father of the movement for rural resuscitation in this country...at least a generation before the Indian National Congress turned its attention in this direction."

This remarkable success story remains largely unknown because it ended abruptly with the arrest of Sen (for sheltering Bagha Jatin) in 1917. Years later, a disappointed Tagore reminisced that he had not been afforded enough time for this story to be written in bright letters in the annals of history.

The forgotten chapter recently came to light with a reprint of the 1941 special edition of the prestigious journal *Shanibarer Chithi*. Produced on the poet's death and edited by Sajani Kanta Das,

it had invited contributions from those who might shed new light on Tagore's vast life experiences. Sen contributed 11 previously unpublished letters and a report on his experience in Kaligram, which put into perspective the important rural intervention Tagore had made.

The immense trust that Tagore had placed in Sen's initiative is evident in the letters. In one, Tagore wrote excitedly: "This is what I had wanted – in this way we make a beginning in one place and see how it spreads everywhere – the wind has caught your sail now and you will surge forward."

In another letter, Tagore advised Sen that he had to invest his heart and mind to win people's hearts and earn their goodwill and unquestioning respect, which in turn would give him a sense of fulfilment in the context of which small irritants would fade away. With great prescience Tagore cautioned: "Remember that in whatever is unfolding, you are merely the witness." R

Reba Som is the granddaughter of Atul Sen and is Director of the Tagore Centre in Kolkata.

A Meeting of Minds

Tagore and **H.G. Wells** met in Geneva in June 1930. Their conversation, which touched on education, literature, music and even racism, is reported here

Tagore: The tendency in modern civilisation is to make the world uniform. Calcutta, Bombay, Hong Kong and other cities are more or less alike, wearing big masks which represent no country in particular.

Wells: Yet don't you think that this very fact is an indication that we are reaching out for a new worldwide human order which refuses to be localised?

Tagore: Our individual physiognomy need not be the same. Let the mind be universal. The individual should not be sacrificed.

Wells: We are gradually thinking now of one human civilisation on the foundation of which individualities will have great chance of fulfilment. The individual, as we take him, has suffered from the fact that civilisation has been split up into separate units, instead of being merged into a universal whole, which seems to be the natural destiny of mankind.

Tagore: I believe the unity of human civilisation can be better maintained by linking up in fellowship and cooperation of the different civilisations of the world. Do you think there is a tendency to have one common language for humanity?

Wells: One common language will probably be forced upon mankind whether we like it or not. Previously, a community of fine minds created a new dialect. Now it is necessity that will compel us to adopt a universal language.

Tagore: I quite agree. The time for five-mile dialects is fast vanishing. Rapid communication makes for a common language. Yet this common language would probably not exclude national languages. There is again the curious fact that just now, along with the growing unities of the human mind, the development of national self-consciousness is leading to the formation or rather the revival of national languages everywhere. Don't you think that in America, in spite of constant touch between America and England, the English language is tending toward a definite modification and change?

Wells: I wonder if that is the case now. Forty or fifty years ago this would have been the case, but now in literature and in common speech it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between English and American.

There seems to be much more repercussion in the other direction. Today we are elaborating and perfecting physical methods of transmitting words. Translation is a bother. Take your poems – do they not lose much by that process? If you had a method of making them intelligible to all people at the same time, it would be really wonderful.

Tagore: Music of different nations has a common psychological foundation, and yet that does not mean that national music should not exist. The same thing is, in my opinion, probably true for literature.

Wells: Modern music is going from one country to another without loss – from Purcell to Bach, then Brahms, then Russian music, then oriental. Music is of all things in the world most international.

Tagore: May I add something? I have composed more than 300 pieces of music. They are all sealed from the West because they cannot properly be given to you in your own notation. Perhaps they would not be intelligible to your people even if I could get them written down in European notation.

Wells: The West may get used to your music.

Tagore: Certain forms of tunes and melodies which move us profoundly seem to baffle Western listeners; yet, as you say, perhaps closer acquaintance with them may gradually lead to their appreciation in the West.

Wells: Artistic expression in the future will probably be quite different from what it is today; the medium will be the same and comprehensible to all. Take radio, which links together the world. And we cannot prevent further invention. Perhaps in the future, when the present clamour for national languages and dialects in broadcasting subsides, and new discoveries in science are made, we shall be conversing with one another through a common medium of speech as yet undreamed of.

Tagore: We have to create the new psychology needed for this age. We have to adjust ourselves to the new necessities and conditions of civilisation.

Wells: Adjustments, terrible adjustments!

Tagore: Do you think there are any fundamental racial difficulties?



Untitled, Woodcut, by Shobha Broota

Image: courtesy Delhi Art Gallery/www.delhiartgallery.com

Wells: No. New races are appearing and reappearing, perpetual fluctuations. There have been race mixtures from the earliest times; India is the supreme example of this. In Bengal, for instance, there has been an amazing mixture of races in spite of caste and other barriers.

Tagore: Then there is the question of racial pride. Can the West fully acknowledge the East? If mutual acceptance is not possible, then I shall be very sorry for that country which rejects another's culture. Study can bring no harm, though men like Dr Haas and Henri Matisse seem to think that the Eastern mind should not go outside Eastern countries, and then everything will be all right.

Wells: I hope you disagree. So do I!

Tagore: It is regrettable that any race or nation should claim divine favouritism and assume inherent superiority to all others in the scheme of creation.

Wells: The supremacy of the West is only a question of probably the past hundred years. Before the battle of Lepanto the Turks were dominating the West; the voyage of Columbus was undertaken to avoid the Turks. Elizabethan writers and even

their successors were struck by the wealth and the high material standards of the East. The history of Western ascendancy is very brief indeed.

Tagore: Physical science of the 19th century probably has created this spirit of race superiority in the West. When the East assimilates this physical science, the tide may turn and take a normal course.

Wells: Modern science is not exactly European. A series of accidents and peculiar circumstances prevented some of the Eastern countries from applying the discoveries made by humanists in other parts of the world. They themselves had once originated and developed a great many of the sciences that were later taken up by the West and given greater perfection. Today, Japanese, Chinese and Indian names in the world of science are gaining due recognition.

Tagore: India has been in a bad situation.

Wells: When Macaulay imposed a third-rate literature and a poor system of education on India, Indians naturally resented it. No human being can live on Scott's poetry. I believe that things are now changing. But, remain assured, we English were not better off. We were no less badly educated than the average Indian – probably even worse.

Tagore: Our difficulty is that our contact with the great civilisations of the West has not been a natural one.

Wells: It is a very bad story indeed, because there have been such great opportunities for knowing each other.

Tagore: And then the channels of education have become dry river beds – the current of our resources having been systematically diverted along other directions.

Wells: I am also a member of a subject race. I am taxed enormously. I have to send my cheque: so much for military aviation, so much for the diplomatic machinery of the government! You see, we suffer from the same evils. In India, the tradition of officialdom is, of course, more unnatural and has been going on for a long time. The Moguls, before the English came, seem to have been as indiscriminate as our own people.

Tagore: And yet there is a difference! The Mogul government was not scientifically efficient and mechanical. The Moguls wanted money, and so long as they could live in luxury they did not wish to interfere with the progressive village communities in India. The Muslim emperors did not dictate terms and force the hands of Indian educators and villagers. Now, for instance, the ancient educational systems of India are completely disorganised, and all Indigenous educational effort has to depend on official recognition.

Wells: 'Recognition' by the state – and goodbye to education!

Tagore: I have often been asked what my plans are. My reply is that I have no scheme. My country, like every other, will evolve its own constitution; it will pass through its experimental phase and settle down into something that is quite different from what you or I expect.

R

Edited extract from *A Tagore Reader* (edited by Amiya Chakravarty and first published by Macmillan in 1961).



Image: courtesy Palazzo Editions, from Einstein: A Hundred Years of Relativity by Andrew Robinson. See page 59 for a review

The Mathematician and the Mystic

What is reality? **Andrew Robinson** and **Dipankar Home** shed some light on the big question that occupied Einstein and Tagore whenever they met

“If the moon, in the act of completing its eternal way around the earth, were gifted with self-consciousness, it would feel thoroughly convinced that it was travelling its way of its own accord on the strength of a resolution taken once and for all,” Albert Einstein wrote in 1930 in a little-known statement entitled *About Free Will*. “Man defends himself from being regarded as an impotent object in the course of the Universe. But should the lawfulness of events, such as unveils itself more or less clearly in inorganic nature, cease to function in front of the activities in our brain?”

Einstein was addressing Rabindranath Tagore in a contribution to a *Festschrift* for Tagore’s 70th birthday. During 1930 the two men had a number of meetings in which they discussed the nature of reality and the relationship of determinism to free will, and they differed from each other profoundly. Publicised at the time – initially in *The New York Times* – the Einstein-Tagore talks continue to spark interest because they tackle some of the fundamental questions debated since the advent of quantum theory.

The philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin, who regarded Tagore as a “highly gifted thinker”, called the talks “a complete non-meeting of minds”. Ilya Prigogine, a Nobel laureate in chemistry, went so far as to say: “Curiously enough, the present evolution of science is running in the direction stated by the great Indian poet.”

A comparable mismatch occurred, famously, between Einstein and Niels Bohr, and lasted for 30 years, right up to Einstein’s death in 1955. A frustrated Bohr was never able to bring Einstein round to accepting the majority view of quantum theory.

Einstein, as he aged, adhered to a belief in realism – that the physical world has objectivity that transcends direct experience, and that propositions are true or false independent of our ability to discern which they are. Provoked by Tagore, Einstein expressed this belief in a remarkably clear-cut fashion:

Einstein: There are two different conceptions about the nature of the universe – the world as a unity dependent on humanity, and the world as reality independent of the human factor

Tagore: This world is a human world – the scientific view of it is also that of the scientific man. Therefore, the world apart

from us does not exist; it is a relative world, depending for its reality upon our consciousness.

A little later, Einstein took up the point again:

Einstein: Truth, then, or beauty, is not independent of man?

Tagore: No.

Einstein: If there were no human beings any more, the Apollo Belvedere no longer would be beautiful?

Tagore: No.

Einstein: I agree with regard to this conception of beauty, but not with regard to truth.

Tagore: Why not? Truth is realised through men.

Einstein: I cannot prove my conception is right, but that is my religion.

After some further discussion – in which Einstein asserted, “I cannot prove, but I believe in the Pythagorean argument, that the truth is independent of human beings” – Einstein became concrete: “The mind acknowledges realities outside of it, independent of it. For instance, nobody may be in this house, yet that table remains where it is.”

Tagore: Yes, it remains outside the individual mind, but not the universal mind. The table is that which is perceptible by some kind of consciousness we possess.

Einstein: If nobody were in the house the table would exist all the same, but this is already illegitimate from your point of view, because we cannot explain what it means, that the table is there, independently of us. Our natural point of view in regard to the existence of truth apart from humanity cannot be explained or proved, but it is a belief which nobody can lack. We attribute to truth a superhuman objectivity.

Tagore: If there be any truth absolutely unrelated to humanity, then for us it is absolutely non-existing.

Einstein: Then I am more religious than you are!

(Here, said the note-taker, Einstein “exclaimed in triumph”.)

The position of Einstein in this last extract is reminiscent of his well-known paradox: “The most incomprehensible fact about Nature is that it is comprehensible.” Nature, for Einstein, had to be independent of man and mind. He could not accept any idea that a universal mind might control Nature. Tagore, by contrast, could accept this. He did not adhere either to Einstein’s realist, objective position or to Bohr’s quasi-positivist, essentially subjective view of Nature, a position that, taken to its logical extreme, denies the existence of the physical world – or at least its dynamical properties – until they are measured. Tagore did not deny the existence of the table when nobody was in the house, but he argued that its existence becomes meaningful for us only when it is perceived by some conscious mind. And he said, further, that there is a universality in the nature of consciousness.

What did Tagore mean by this concept of a universal human mind? He once wrote: “The Universe is like a cobweb and minds are the spiders; for mind is one as well as many.” Pursuing the example of the table with Einstein, he said: “Science has proved that the table as a solid object is an appearance and therefore that which the human mind perceives as a table would not exist if that mind were naught. At the same time it must be admitted that the fact that the physical reality of the table is nothing but a multitude of separate revolving centres of electric force also belongs to the human mind. There is an

eternal conflict between the universal human mind and the same mind confined in the individual.”

Einstein was committed to the realism, determinism and strict causality of classical physics, as he made plain to Tagore in their second, more free-ranging conversation:

Tagore: I was discussing with Dr Mendel [a friend of Einstein] the new mathematical discoveries that tell us that in the realm of atoms chance has its play; the drama of existence is not absolutely predestined in character.

Einstein: The facts that make science tend towards this view do not say goodbye to causality.

Tagore: Maybe not; but it appears that the idea of causality is not in the elements, that some other force builds up with them an organised universe.

Einstein: One tries to understand how the order is the higher plane. The order is there, where the big elements combine and guide existence; but in the minute elements this order is not perceptible.

Tagore: This duality is in the depths of existence – the contradiction of free impulse and directive will which works upon it and evolves an orderly scheme of things.

Einstein: Modern physics would not say they are contradictory. Clouds look as one from a distance, but if you see them near, they show themselves in disorderly drops of water.

Tagore: Are the elements rebellious, dynamic with individual impulse? And is there a principle in the physical world which dominates them and puts them into an orderly organisation?

Einstein: Even the elements are not without statistical order; elements of radium will always maintain their specific order, now and ever onwards, just as they have done all along. There is, then, a statistical order in the elements.

Tagore: Otherwise the drama of existence would be too desultory. It is the constant harmony of chance and determination which makes it eternally new and living.

Einstein: I believe that whatever we do or live for has its causality; it is good, however, that we cannot look through it.

To summarise, then, we can discern three philosophical attitudes towards the relationship between man and Nature arising from the Einstein-Tagore conversations. The first, held by Einstein, is that Nature exists, objectively, whether we know it or not. The second, held by Bohr, is that the objective existence of Nature has no meaning independent of the measurement process. The third position, held by Tagore, is more complex. Tagore says that Nature can be conceived only in terms of our mental constructions based on what we think we perceive and that there exists a universal mind.

Einstein went on worrying at the “reality question” until the day he died; so, less conspicuously, did Tagore. Neither came to a definite conclusion. All three viewpoints have adherents throughout science today and it will be interesting to see how the balance alters as science changes: will Prigogine’s prediction – that science is evolving according to Tagore – come true? R

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) in 1995.

Andrew Robinson is the author of Einstein: A Hundred Years of Relativity. Dipankar Home is Senior Professor in the Department of Physics, Bose Institute, Kolkata. His latest book (co-authored with Andrew Whitaker) is Einstein’s Struggles with Quantum Theory: A Reappraisal.

A Precious Legacy

The story of Tagore, the Elmhirsts and Dartington represents an unusual convergence of people, projects and ideas that can still inspire our contemporary world, writes Ursula King

Much has been written about Rabindranath Tagore, Leonard Elmhirst and the founding of Dartington. Besides the rich accounts in personal letters and books by the protagonists themselves, several biographers have sketched the different personalities and their achievements in considerable detail, drawing on collections in the Dartington and Santiniketan archives, as well as those of Cornell University. What emerges is a complex picture of personal friendships and collaboration across many frontiers – all at a time when ideas about international aid and development had not yet been thought of.

I discovered all this with much surprise and thrill when I first went to Dartington in 1990, soon learning about its amazing history and the unusual motivation and inspiration of its founders. The start of Dartington in 1925 related to an experiment in farming, forestry, education and the arts, born out of a meeting of minds from India, England and America. Dartington's economic, cultural and spiritual aims emerged out of an inspiring vision of personal and social renewal, of sharing an abundant life close to Nature in which "values of scholarship, community, economics and technology" would be balanced and combined. This idealistic vision developed through an encounter of ideas and people from East and West, but it could only be put into practice by scientific and educational know-how, and by the provision of the necessary funds.

Besides Tagore and Elmhirst, others involved were Sam Higginbottom, an agricultural expert who was working in India and known to Tagore, and the American Dorothy Whitney Straight, one of the world's richest women at that time. Straight eventually became Elmhirst's wife and provided the financial wherewithal to support Tagore's rural reconstruction work in Bengal, undertake the purchase of Dartington Hall in 1925, and fund much else besides: theatre, dance, the arts, the first international conference of agricultural economists, Cambridgeshire village colleges and many other projects. She not only did much for the arts at Dartington but also represents an important feminine dimension in this web of global friendships and collaboration.

Dartington's 50th anniversary was marked by a Tagore Festival in 1976. Now again, on the 150th anniversary of

Tagore's birth, his abiding influence is being celebrated once more at Dartington, which owes so much to him. Leonard Elmhirst acknowledged this again and again. Writing in June 1934 to "Dear Gurudev" – the name ('Teacher Divine') by which the boys at the Santiniketan school addressed Tagore – he said: "our efforts here form but a trickle compared to the great outpouring that has gradually encircled the world from Santiniketan. Although our economic plans and our organisation might come from our experience in the West, the idea of uniting this with a school for children and of unifying the whole through a department of the arts...was an idea we owed entirely to one source. In our many struggles on this side of the globe I have often felt your sympathy and understanding, reaching over towards us, though nothing was said or written about it."

This was written nine years after Dartington's foundation. The origin and development of the economic, educational and artistic activities spawned by Dartington (now continued in a different key by Schumacher College) have been described on numerous occasions. Michael Young's superb 1982 retelling of this extraordinary story carried the subtitle *The Creation of an Utopian Community*. Might that perhaps point to the ultimate impracticability and eventual ending of a great experiment once the main protagonists have gone? Or is it a prophetic utterance, implying the creative power and inspirational force inherent in the collaborative works and ideas created by Tagore, the Elmhirsts and the foundation of Dartington? What legacy is there to enrich us today in a vastly changed world of global interdependence?

To answer this, let me weave together just a few strands of this compelling story.

Young Leonard Elmhirst, born in Yorkshire in 1893 and originally destined for the Church, decided after the completion of his history degree at Cambridge to join the YMCA in India, longing to "work wholly amongst and for Indians". He lived in different parts of India in 1915–16 and again in 1917–18, with a spell of work in Basra and on the river Tigris in between. The experience of the First World War changed his idea of becoming a clergyman. Instead, he followed the advice of Presbyterian missionary Sam Higginbottom, who had trained in agriculture in the US and had his own agricultural institute in Allahabad.



Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst
Photo: courtesy The Dartington Hall Trust

Higginbottom suggested that if Elmhirst wanted to work with villagers, he needed to go America to study for a degree in agricultural economics in order to know about "farming as a business" rather than as just an art, science or tradition.

Thus Elmhirst made his way eventually to Cornell University, where he studied agricultural economics between 1919 and 1921. It was during this time that he met Dorothy Whitney Straight and also Tagore, who was on a fund-raising visit. Straight was the daughter of the millionaire William C. Whitney, and the widow of the financier Willard Straight, who had died of influenza while on a peace mission in Paris in 1918, leaving her with three small children. Willard had given money to Cornell to make it a better place for students, and Elmhirst appealed to this fund on behalf of the foreign students he represented. To make his case, he met Dorothy in New York in September 1920, followed by many other meetings. Over these negotiations he fell in love with her and her children – he was 27 and she was 33. After a long courtship, much correspondence and several proposals, they eventually married in April 1925.

Elmhirst knew of Tagore's great reputation from his previous stay in India, but he did not know that Tagore had also heard about him from Higginbottom, who had hoped to recruit Elmhirst to his institute in Allahabad but was thwarted by his own missionary organisation, which did not consider Elmhirst a sufficiently committed Christian to take him on. Higginbottom therefore recommended this young Englishman as just the right

Can we rekindle the big vision Tagore shared with the Elmhirsts?

person for the rural development Tagore wanted to undertake in the villages surrounding his school at Santiniketan.

Tagore and Elmhirst first met in May 1921, in New York. The poet was then 60, and the young 'plowman', as he later described himself, just 28. This age difference presented no barrier; they immediately liked each other and became lifelong friends, and Elmhirst soon went out to India to work with Tagore on his educational and cultural projects.

Tagore so came to appreciate Elmhirst's ability, kindness and inherent humanity that, before long, Elmhirst became his secretary and intellectual companion. He accompanied him on his travels to China and South America, absorbing the poet's educational, philosophical and spiritual ideals. Through this close collaboration with Tagore between 1921 and 1925, Elmhirst came to know the visionary poet, artist and spiritual philosopher-guide more intimately than any other Westerner and he perceived something of the spiritual quality diffused through his presence.

Initially Dorothy liked Tagore much less than Leonard did. As she was unfamiliar with Indian customs, Tagore's clothes and bearing seemed strange to her. In 1921, before their meeting, Tagore had written to her appealing for a large donation to endow a chair at his new Visva-Bharati University – perhaps a "Willard Straight Professorship of Oriental Arts or Music"? But Dorothy did not feel motivated to do so. Yet when Leonard departed for India, she was only too willing to provide the



Dorothy Elmhirst in the 1970s
Photo: courtesy The Dartington Hall Trust

necessary funding for him to undertake the planned village development work – and she went on paying for Sriniketan until 1947! In later years she came to love Tagore's letters, and he dedicated his Hibbert Lectures (published in 1931), with their universalising vision on *The Religion of Man*, to her.

Tagore visited the Elmhirsts in Dartington in 1926 and again in 1930; Leonard visited India every two years, but Dorothy went only once. During his youth, Tagore had lived from 1878 to 1880 in England with his brother's family; in 1879, at the age of 18, he had been for a holiday in Torquay and had fallen in love with the meadows, woods and cliffs in the area, so when the Elmhirsts, inspired by his example, were looking for a place to start a small school and promote rural reconstruction in England, Tagore suggested they look somewhere in Devon. And they did. They came upon the run-down medieval Dartington Hall, which they bought and developed following many of Tagore's ideas.

That was the beginning of a daring English experiment that impacted on the lives of countless people. Plenty of unexpected problems came their way, but Dartington acted like a magnet in attracting many talented people to create a growing web of innovations and outstanding achievements for the benefit of many individuals and communities.

In his 1937 summary *Faith and Works* at Dartington, Leonard listed the aims of Dartington's activities as simply "economic and cultural". But this is far too modest, for Dartington achieved and stood originally for so much more and reached out so widely.

Tagore's vision embraced a large-scale universalism, most unusual during his lifetime, given the political context of colonial dominance. His vision moved to ever larger circles, from India to

Asia, to the world. In 1901, he had started his school for children at Santiniketan, a "new forest school" where the beauty of Nature and noble human pursuits could coexist in harmony. Although inspired by the ancient Indian forest ashrams, it was not meant to be an imitation of the old, but took in new learning, including ideas from England and the USA.

Twenty years later, Tagore developed Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan with a bold interdisciplinary vision expressed through the motto "Where the whole world meets in one place". To develop this university he went on a fund-raising mission to the West. In the same year he also started his outreach work to the villages through agriculture, education and health services, and Leonard Elmhirst came to help with the poet's rural reconstruction project at Sriniketan, a tribal village of the Santals.

As he explained in his lectures and writings, Tagore tried to combine the best of East and West. He wanted to marry the spirit of India with that of the world, and to communicate this synthesis to his fellow human beings. But he was also critical of the West and saw its forces as disruptive rather than constructive of what he envisaged as the world's commonwealth. His philosophy is not exclusively Indian, but universal. It finds personal expression in his book *Sadhana: The Realization of Life* (1913), where Nature, the human and the Divine are closely interwoven, and where the mystical seer is not withdrawn from life, but deeply immersed in it.

The correspondence between Leonard Elmhirst and Tagore reveals the depth of their friendship, and also something of its subtle spiritual dimension, including the combination of the practical with the spiritual – something our world needs so much. Tagore is not as well known in the West today as he was in the early and mid-20th century. Yet Santiniketan, Sriniketan and Dartington owe their existence to this meeting of minds from India, America and England. These relationships can be understood as an early prototype of the sorts of global friendship and collaborations that have become far more widespread and, of course, so much easier to forge and sustain today than half a century ago.

The story of Tagore, the Elmhirsts and Dartington represents an unusual convergence of people, projects and patterns of ideas that constitutes a precious legacy for the contemporary world. There was rural development and a search for self-sufficiency; there was closeness to Nature, education as an adventure, combining the best of tradition with new discoveries and invention; there was love of the arts, of aesthetics and of spirituality; and there was global outreach and universalism with a vision of the unity of humankind that overcomes all narrow tribalisms and nationalisms.

Tagore's final testament, entitled *Crisis in Civilisation*, written shortly before his death in 1941 and at a critical moment in world history, finishes with a quotation from Sanskrit: "By unrighteousness man prospers, gains what appears desirable, conquers enemies, but perishes at the root."

Is that the fate of a society of greed and lack of vision? Or can we honour the precious legacy of Tagore, the Elmhirsts and Dartington by rekindling the fire of their vision and the power of daring that pervaded their work, and that they were able to share with so many?

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Ursula King is a writer and lecturer with a special interest in Indian religions and culture. Her most recent book is *The Search for Spirituality* (2009).

Geographical boundaries
have lost their significance
in the modern world.

People of the world
have come closer.

We must realise this and
understand that this closeness
must be founded on love...
the East and West must join hands
in the pursuit of truth.

– Rabindranath Tagore

TAGORE FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS



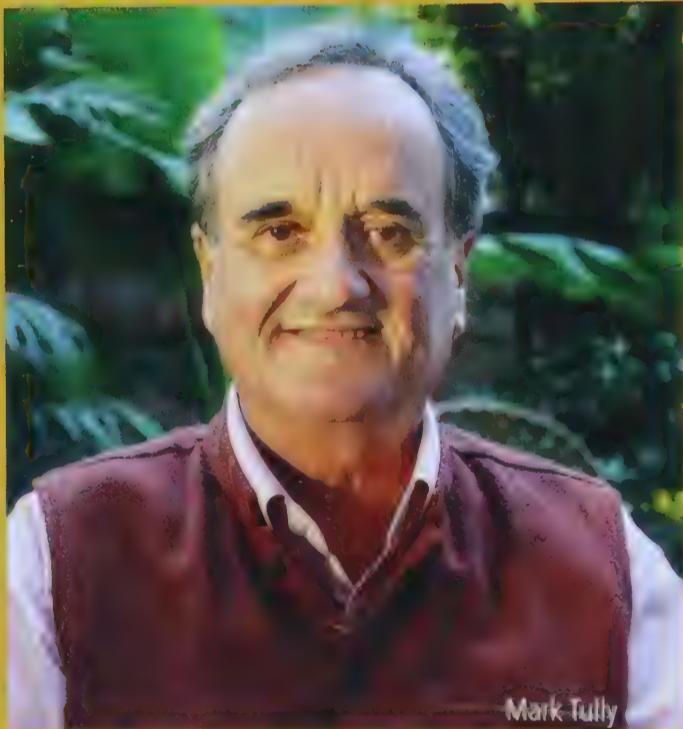
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Gopak Chatterjee



Benjamin Zephaniah



Mark Tully



Amit Chaudhuri



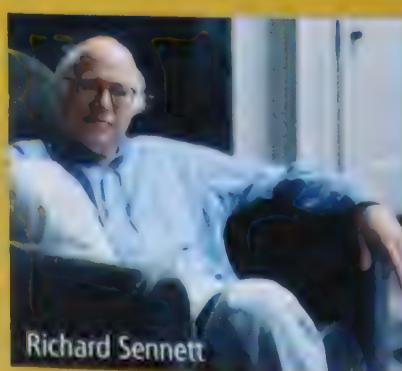
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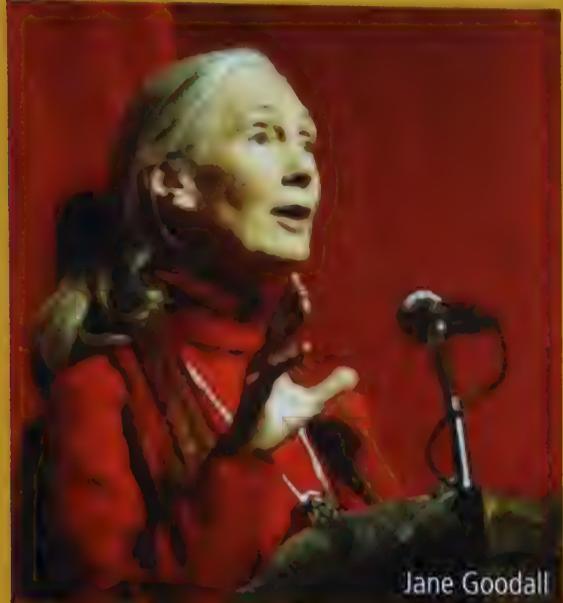
William Radice



Richard Sennett

Box Office: 01803 847070 www.dartington.org/tagore | 50

PRESENTERS AND PERFORMERS



Jane Goodall



Anthony Seldon



The Awakening



Andrew Motion



Aditi Mangaldas



Vandana Shiva



Alice Oswald



Tim Smit



Michael Morpurgo

The Awakening	1 May, 8pm
Jane Goodall	2 May, 5.30pm
Sonal Mansingh	2 May, 8pm
Anthony Seldon	3 May, 12 noon
William Radice	4 May, 12 noon
Paban Das	4 May, 8pm
Benjamin Zephaniah	5 May, 10am
Andrew Motion	5 May, 2.30pm
Peter Randall-Page	5 May, 12 noon
Alice Oswald	5 May, 5-10pm
Tim Smit	5 May, 5.30pm
Richard Sennett	6 May, 12 noon
Deepak Chopra	6 May, 2.30 & 4pm
Amit Chaudhuri	6 May, 5.30pm
Aditi Mangaldas	6 May, 2.30pm
Michael Morpurgo	7 May, 12 noon
Mark Tully	7 May, 2.30pm
Vandana Shiva	7 May, 4pm

TAGORE FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS



Jonathon Porritt



Wajahat Khan



Chloe Goodchild



The Wife's Letter

Vinitha Rajkumar	1 May, 4pm
Bhavan	2 May, 2.30pm
Matt Harvey	Several times
Chloe Goodchild	3 May, 8pm
Clare Short	4 May, 2.30pm
The Wife's Letter	5 May, 2.30pm
Simon Armitage	5 May, 4pm
Penelope Shuttle	5 May, 4pm
Shanti Panchal	5 May, 4pm
Zena Edwards	5 May, 5-10pm
Ansuman Biswas	5 May, 5-10pm
Malika Booker	5 May, 5-10pm
Kangaroo Moon	5 May, 8pm
Jonathon Porritt	6 May, 10am
Wajahat Khan	6 May, 8pm
Rob Hopkins	7 May, 10am
Anusha Subramanyam	7 May, 4pm



Penelope Shuttle



Shanti Panchal



Vinitha Rajkumar

PRESENTERS AND PERFORMERS



Rob Hopkins



Zena Edwards



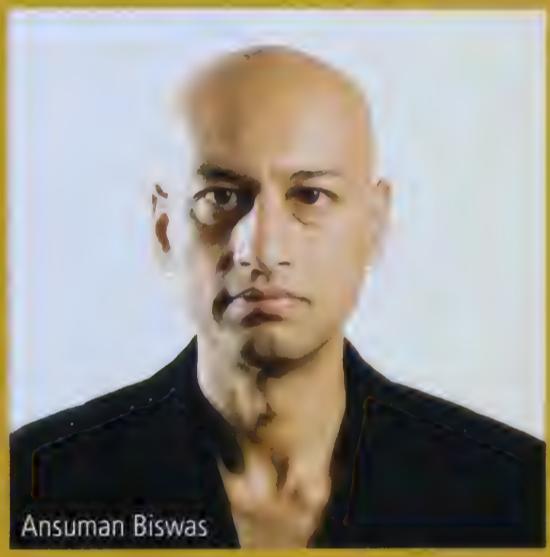
Simon Armitage



Anusha Subramanyam



Celia Short



Ansuman Biswas



Matt Harvey



Bhavan



Kangaroo Moon



Untitled, by Rabindranath Tagore

Image: courtesy Nirmalya Kumar

The Jiban-debata

Tagore was a prolific writer of stories, songs and poetry. Here **William Radice**, who has translated much of his work, explores that mysterious and creative force of the imagination that the poet was tapping into

Anyone who writes about Rabindranath Tagore will soon discover that his concept of the Jiban-debata must be mentioned. It is not at all easy to explain what the Jiban-debata was and what it meant to Tagore. It can be literally translated as 'life-deity', but that does not get us very far. In several places in his prose writings, Tagore himself attempted to explain the concept, and in a series of essays that were later brought together into a volume called *Atmaparichay* (Of Myself, Visva-Bharati, 1943), he gave special attention to the Jiban-debata, describing how his life and works were an expression of it.

In an essay written in 1904-5 and translated by Devadatta Joardar and Joe Winter, Tagore wrote: "The poet who takes up all the good and bad in me, all my constituent parts, the favourable and unfavourable alike, to go on creating my life – it is he that in my poetry I call Jiban-debata. I do not believe that he is merely

giving a unity to the fragmentariness of my present life, allowing it to be in harmony with the world. From time immemorial and through any number of forgotten situations, I know he has brought me to the expression of the present moment. An immense memory of a long sequence of existence continuing through this world has gathered round him, and lies in me, in my unconscious. That is why I can feel a kinship of such long standing with the world's flora and fauna. That is why the huge mysterious world does not seem alien and terrible."

The problem with explanations like this is that one quickly concludes that the Jiban-debata was a kind of overarching destiny or fate that governed and directed all aspects of Tagore's life. This kind of determinism is not very easy to accept rationally, and can indeed be dangerous. How do we distinguish Tagore's concept of the Jiban-debata from the self-righteous sense of mission that motivates religious or political fanatics? Tagore with his tolerant, humane and Universalist outlook can never be associated with such an attitude. So, if not destiny or fate, what was the mysterious Jiban-debata?

The first thing to grasp is that the Jiban-debata was not a theory; it was an experience, and one that varied in intensity according to the ebb and flow of Tagore's creativity. When his creativity was in full flight, he felt very close to the Jiban-debata. At other times, when he felt lonely, anxious or depressed, the Jiban-debata could seem remote and aloof.

In his paintings there are haunting images of semi-veiled females who avoid looking directly at the onlooker. Of the various poetic images and symbols that Tagore used to embody the Jiban-debata, a mysterious female, present but half out of sight, occurs frequently. Many people have associated these mysterious and elusive females with the women in Tagore's life whom he had loved and lost. (His sister-in-law Kadambari, who tragically committed suicide soon after Tagore was married in December 1883, certainly lies behind many of these images; but we must also associate with them his wife Mrinalini, who died in 1902, and women later in his life who gave him affection and encouragement, such as the Argentinian writer Victoria Ocampo.)

However, these enigmatic symbols are not the Jiban-debata itself, but an attempt to represent it poetically. To get closer to Tagore's actual experience of the Jiban-debata, we have to enter deeply into his poetry, for the Jiban-debata was, above all, a force or principle that governed and guided and inspired it.

Recently, in my work on a new translation of *Gitanjali* – which also offers an entirely new text of Tagore's own translation based on his manuscript – I have been constantly aware of the presence of the Jiban-debata. The poems in the English *Gitanjali* (first published in 1912), stemmed from two Bengali books of poems and songs: *Gitanjali* and *Gitimalya*.

When Tagore started experimentally to do his English translations at his family estate at Sheliadah, he was also writing poems that were to be published in *Gitimalya*. As he progressed with the translations, he went back to the earlier book *Gitanjali*; later still, he went back to his book *Naibedya* (*Offerings*, 1901), and he finally brought in poems from his book *Kheyā* (*The Ferry*, 1906). But the intense creativity of the 'Gitanjali phase' (i.e. the three books *Gitanjali*, *Gitimalya* and *Gitali*), with its mixture of poems and songs, and intense introspection and spirituality, was what impelled his translation project and was the reason for its ultimate title *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*.

The intensity of this phase was very well evoked by Buddhadeva Bose, a major figure in 20th-century Bengali poetry and criticism. In an article entitled *Tagore in Translation*, published in 1963, he wrote: "It is on record that while composing the Bengali

To get closer to Tagore's actual experience of the Jiban-debata, we have to enter deeply into his poetry

lyrics, he was like a haunted man, roaming at night among the sal trees of Santiniketan ['house of peace' – the name of the farm and community where Tagore lived], filling pages while travelling by train or bullock-carts, piling up as many as five or six during a single day. Of this mood of rapture, it seems, these translations were a by-product: we should note that in the spring and summer of 1912 he was at the same time translating and writing new pieces in Bengali."

The extraordinary thing is that this intensely creative phase followed immediately on a long period of devastating suffering and bereavement. Tagore's wife's death in 1902 was followed by the death, six months later, of his daughter Renuka and, five years later, of his son Samindranath. In 1904, Satischandra Ray, a brilliant young man and a promising poet whom Tagore identified as a key teacher and participant in his fledgling educational project at Santiniketan, died too; and in 1905 Tagore lost his father Debendranath – an eminent and influential figure in the Bengal Renaissance, and leader for many years of the religious and social reform movement the Brahmo Samaj.

This was, by any standards, a crushing accumulation of loss, and the effect of it on someone as sensitive as Tagore is beyond imagining. One can well understand how such an experience can turn a poet in on himself, towards introspection and reflection. Less easy to understand is how it can paradoxically produce such an outburst of creative energy.

This paradox is at the very heart of the Jiban-debata. It implies a kind of disjunction between one's creative mind and one's eating, sleeping,



Dancing woman, by Rabindranath Tagore

Image: courtesy Nirmalya Kumar

loving and grieving existence. The two levels are, of course, interrelated: but it was Tagore's experience – as, through the ages, it has been the experience of many creative people – that creativity follows laws and energies of its own.

The Jiban-debata is what enables great artists to produce masterpieces at times of extraordinary suffering, unhappiness or illness. It involves a kind of 'tapping into' the creative forces of the universe as a whole. It carries with it a faith that is bigger and broader than what is normally understood by faith in the religious sense. It is the faith that enables artists to complete great works of art, politicians to carry out great projects, and entrepreneurs to build astonishing businesses. Without that kind of faith, we cannot do anything creative.

In a sense, the creative energy of the Jiban-debata is like the power of the sun. It is always there, and we are all dependent on it. But we are aware of it to varying degrees according to the weather, according to our mood, according to whether it is day or night.

The shortest and most celebrated of the Upanishads, the Isa Upanishad, ends with a prayer to the sun that it should withdraw its rays and reveal the *purusha*, the 'person', who lies behind those rays. That 'person' is of course ultimately God or Brahman, and so God and the Jiban-debata ultimately have to be seen as one and the same. Just as one's creative energy is mysterious, baffling,

elusive, sometimes absent, so too is God. And the poems and songs of Gitanjali – whether in their Bengali originals, or in Tagore's translations – record the endless fluctuations in the relationship between the poet's own creative being and the creativity of God.

There is a poem in Tagore's book *Chitra* (The Multi-coloured, 1896) called *Jiban-debata*, which tackles the concept head-on. The poem is not in Gitanjali; I have not yet translated it, and I am not sure how well it would work in translation. But it is a very interesting poem to read, and I will attempt a paraphrase of it here.

It consists of four sections that vary between nine and eleven lines in length, and the lines of the poem alternate between quite long lines and shorter lines. The language is elevated and sonorous. Addressing the Being who is *antaratama*, 'the one who is deepest within us', Tagore asks if all its thirsts have been satisfied by coming into his (the poet's) heart. He asks if he has filled the cup of this Being with streams of harsh torment that have been squeezed out of him like wine from crushed grapes. He says that he has decorated the bridal chamber of this Being with many *ragas* and rhythms. He has made perpetually new images for the entertainment of this Being by melting down the gold of his desires.

In the next section Tagore says to this Being that he does not know with what hope or aim he has been chosen by it. He asks if his nights, his dawns, his pleasures, his work have been to the liking of this Being in the lonely place where it lives. He asks if this Being, sitting on its lonely throne, has heard the music that his heart has created in the rainy season, autumn, winter and spring. He asks this Being, this *Jiban-debata*, if it has wandered in the forest of the poet's *yauban*, the source of his youth and energy and sexual passion, and made garlands for itself.

In the third section Tagore asks the *Jiban-debata*, calling it this time *bandhu* ('friend'), if it has looked into the poet's heart and forgiven him for his mistakes and shortcomings. He goes on to describe the moments when his creativity has failed him; when he has not offered the *Jiban-debata* true worship; when he has gone into the garden of *Jiban-debata* intending to water the flowers but instead falling asleep in the shade and then at evening bringing only the water of his tears.

In the last section of the poem Tagore

asks, as he does so often in his poetry, whether his creativity is finished; whether his embracing of the Jiban-debata has become *sithil* ('slack'); whether his kiss has lost its sweetness; whether the night on which he was expecting a tryst with his beloved has now faded into the dawn. He ends with a call to the Jiban-debata to infuse him with energy and to bind him in a new marriage *nabin-jiban-dore* ('with the ropes of new life').

Very evident from this poem is the intensely personal, even erotic nature of Tagore's relationship with the Jiban-debata. I mentioned earlier that the Jiban-debata is often symbolised by a mysterious female figure; but in this poem the poet identifies himself with the female and the Jiban-debata is imagined as male. This stance is very much in the Bengali Vaishnava tradition, in which the relationship between man and God is symbolised by the love between Radha and Krishna.

Also striking is the loneliness of the Jiban-debata. If the Jiban-debata and the poet's own creativity are one and the same, it is inevitable that the loneliness that the poet often feels should also be found in the Jiban-debata itself. Finally there is the mysterious way in which the Jiban-debata can exert its power through moods and phases, even when that power is apparently in abeyance.

The poem I have summarised was written in 1895, quite a lot earlier than the poems and translations of the Gitanjali phase. But it can be seen as prophetic of the period of loss and grief and inertia from which the energy of the Gitanjali phase ultimately emerged. It was as if, during that harrowing period, seeds were being laid under the ground that would eventually emerge as great poems and songs.

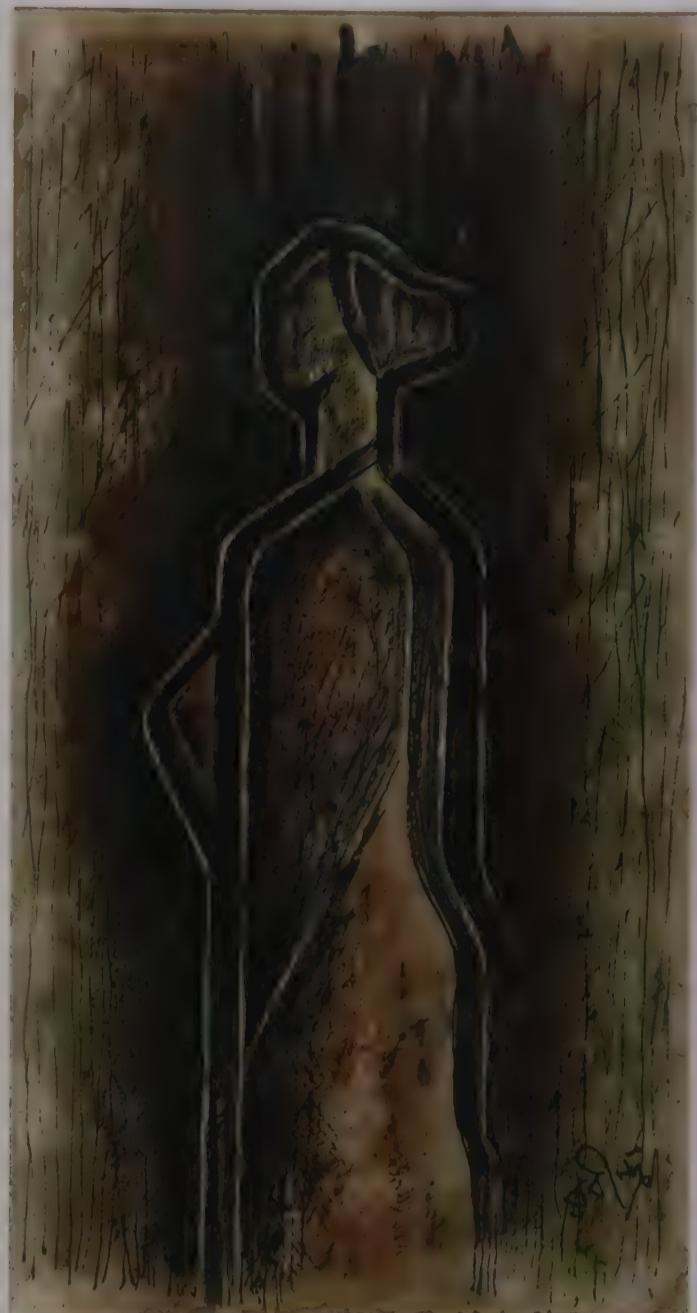
In a book that I first published in India in 2000, and which is coming out shortly in a new edition from Penguin India, I translated the collected 'brief poems' of Tagore – the very short verses that he wrote at intervals throughout his life, and particularly on his travels abroad. (The new edition will be called *The Jewel That Is Best: Collected Brief Poems*.) There is a poem in the first part of the book, *Kanika* ('Particles'), which I often think of. It beautifully expresses in only four brief lines the importance of these fallow periods; how times that can seem dark and uncreative may paradoxically be 'the best time' out of which a harvest will ultimately spring:

The Best Time

Dark heavy rain of grief has come.
O brother farmer, don't sit at home.
Dry heart has turned to rain-soft loam.
Sow your seeds: it's the best time.

I end this reflection on Tagore's Jiban-debata on a personal note. I completed my translation of Gitanjali, with its new text of Tagore's translation, an extensive introduction and five appendices, at Santiniketan, the place where Tagore founded his school and university, and where many of the poems and songs I was translating were written. I had been invited there as a Visiting Professor by Rabindra-Bhavana, the department of Visva-Bharati that preserves Tagore's archives and the largest library of books on Tagore in the world.

Soon after my arrival, I slipped and fell heavily, fracturing and dislocating my right wrist. Yet somehow, despite the pain and inconvenience of this, I managed to complete the book, using dictation and left-handed typing and relying on help and support from many friends in India and in Britain. As I worked



Untitled, by Rabindranath Tagore
Image: courtesy Nirmalya Kumar

on the book, seemingly never faltering however much pain I was in, I was constantly aware of the mysterious workings of the Jiban-debata. That same disjunction between its creative energy and one's physical existence was ever apparent to me.

The experience brought me close to the mystery of creativity in a double sense: on the one hand the extraordinary creativity of Tagore's poems and songs; on the other my own creativity that was somehow relentlessly driving the book forward. This is why I said at the beginning of this article that the Jiban-debata is an experience, not a theory. You can't really understand what it is unless you yourself have experienced it.

As a creative person, I have frequently been aware of the mystery of creativity throughout my life. But never have I felt the experience more intensely than I did during those two months at Santiniketan, working all day and every day on the book, and completing it on the very day on which the plaster cast that had immobilised my right arm was removed. R

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The Relevance of Tagore

Although Rabindranath Tagore grew up in Edwardian times, his poetry and philosophy of life and death are as relevant today as ever, writes Deepak Chopra

Tagore's contribution to our understanding of spirituality as a domain of human awareness that is universal is deeply needed to repair our wounded soul and heal our planet.

Born in 1861 in Bengal – where in 1912 he published a little book called *Gitanjali* ('Song Offering') that remains his best-known work – Tagore won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, and was the first Asian to do so.

He also (as we have seen from other articles in this special anniversary issue) painted, composed music, lectured, farmed, founded schools and established a university. Showered with praise and fame, he became a saint in his homeland and wandered the world until his death in 1941.

These are the bare facts of a great life. Yet the cosmic dimension of Tagore's mind and heart is what captures our attention in his poetry. His voice is humble – he calls himself a "hollow reed carried over hill and dale", and God is the flautist playing endless songs through him. But this humble instrument seems to know God personally. He is intimate with the reality of love as a spiritual force.

Tagore wrote of life and love but also made us see death as part of the continuum of life. The fear of death witnessed in our age is rooted in deep emotions far in the past. Whatever you resist you will fear. When people are dying, they often try to make it go away by saying, "This isn't happening to me. It

can't be true. Something will save me." As the process continues, resistance makes it more and more painful. But of course we can be much more afraid of dying before it happens. I can think of no more healing words than those of Tagore: "When I want to know the most intimate truths of the universe, I turn to Him."

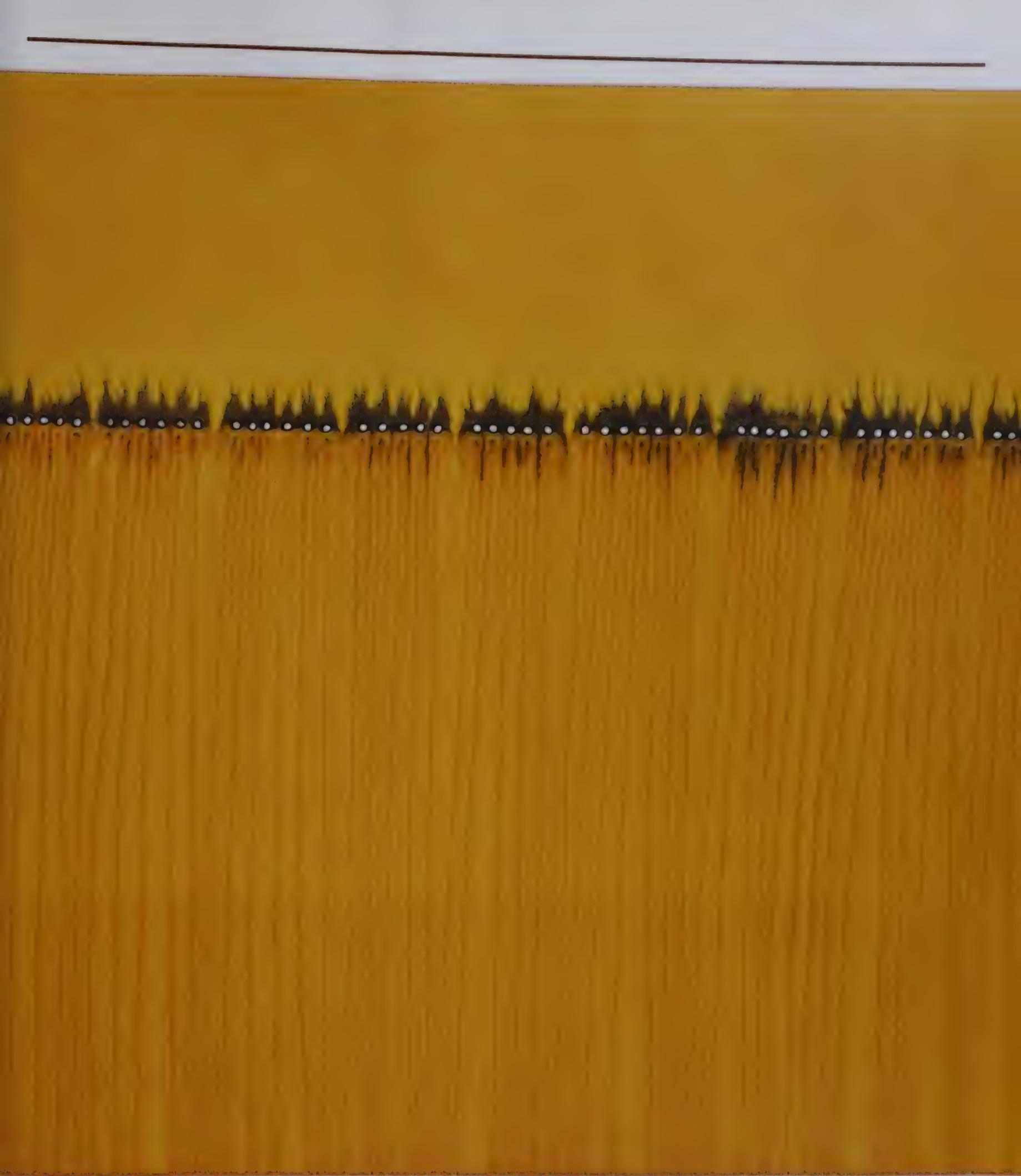
Tagore knew that the most profound subjects – love, truth, compassion, birth and death – were His. Many others have written about love and death, but no one has joined them together with the passion of Tagore. Turning him into another face of his Lord, Tagore actually saw himself as Death's beloved. When he cries "Death, oh my death, whisper to me! For you alone have I kept watch day after day", you can hear a rare emotion, pure ecstasy, in his voice.

You will not find a morbid word anywhere when Tagore talks about death. He transmutes every tremble of anxiety into words of solace and comfort. Actually, comfort wouldn't be the right word, because Tagore is too triumphant and self-assured to need it: "Because I love this life," he writes, "I know I shall love death as well."

The cosmic dimension of Tagore's mind is what captures our attention. To be so deeply religious and yet to include the everyday feelings that we all have is his unique gift. For Tagore had no need to romanticise or gloss over any feelings. "Don't be ashamed of tears," he says. "The earth's tears keep her flowers blooming."

Infinity has no place to go and eternity has no past or future





Purusha VI, 2008, by Sohan Qadri

Image: courtesy Sundaram Tagore Gallery/www.sundaramtagore.com

The first-time reader of Tagore will be enchanted by the emotion and music of his poems. Tagore's work goes beyond logic or even ordinary poetry, for he was also a spiritual teacher whose view of the world turns our everyday perspective upside down. He saw the soul as much more real than any material object, and because of his complete confidence in spiritual reality, he sang of death as a joyful voyage back home. It's important to realise that Tagore wasn't talking about going to heaven. Home meant the same expanded awareness,

the same arrival in God-consciousness that is achieved through enlightenment. In one of his most beautiful sayings, he declares, "Dying is exhaustion, but ending is perfection." In other words, the body dies when it has become too fatigued and worn out to continue, but our consciousness finds its completion in the perfection of enlightenment.

I would like to explain why this is not just a religious belief and not merely Eastern.

As a physician I have been in the emergency room with

hundreds of dying people. For the most part I have witnessed them, even in the acute struggle of death, going through definite stages. At some point in the throes of a heart attack or some massive trauma, it dawns that they aren't going to make it. Panic ensues, then for a few moments an intense resistance is followed by resignation. I am sure that denial and anger are also going on. The entire range of the dying process, as we are now familiar with it, occurs. For someone with a chronic illness like cancer or AIDS, the process is drawn out in days or months. In the emergency room there is no time for that.

Yet it doesn't occur to us that this whole drama may be rooted in our belief that death is a form of suffering. Tagore doesn't accept such suffering; to him it is the outcome of lack of preparation. In our society death still ranks as a taboo; therefore, no one has taught us how to die in advance – what the New Testament calls "dying unto death". In Tagore we find an exuberance in the face of death, a joy in the anticipation of it, because he is so supremely prepared for it. You can only wonder how he did this so completely that he turned anxiety into ecstasy, but Tagore gives us the answer himself: he went to the core of inner silence.

What did this silence tell him? First, it made him aware that death is always stalking us, every moment of our lives, not as an enemy but as part of the unknown that surrounds existence. You only have to look over your shoulder to see that death is a little closer than the last time you looked. Having faced this fact, would you live in perpetual anxiety? For Tagore it made life magical, because he was forced to change his priorities. "Things that I longed for and things that I pursued, let them pass away," he writes. "Instead let me truly possess what I overlooked and ignored." What would these overlooked things be? Harmony, laughter, compassion and, above all, love.

Silence also allowed Tagore to gain a detachment that had

pure joy in it. To understand this aspect, you have to understand that Tagore's mind is not limited to the mind of an individual, but rather encompasses the mind of an entire spiritual culture. He is the point of a sword held in the hand of many centuries. If you could summarise it, this tradition holds that you are not your body or your intellect or your ego. These are part of the scenery, but you are the seer. The world of forms, which includes my body and personality, is subject to change. But all change has to occur against the background of non-change. When I am in touch with my core, I realise clearly that death happens only to the changing body and not to me.

Reading Tagore, you see that this is not just an intellectual position, but an authentic experience. His expression emerges with great personal conviction. Thus he can say, "I shall enter the same unknown that was ever known to me." Birth and death are twins, the opposite sides of the unknown, one door leading in, the other out. He uses a beautiful, simple image here: dying feels terrifying because we are like babies who cry out when pulled from our mother's breast, only to be consoled in the next instant when her other breast appears.

If we all had access to Tagore's perspective, would it not alleviate the suffering of millions of people? I have heard religious people express peace in the face of death, but I would suggest that often this is emotionally based or supported by mere belief. I have mixed feelings about this, because we need to know from real experience, not just a leap of faith, what death is about. We find this by attacking the problem



Agni II, 2005, by Sohan Qadri

Image courtesy Sundaram Tagore Gallery/www.sundaramtagore.com

of death indirectly, not head-on. Asking a different question, "Who am I?" helps us know death because it contains the answers to all the bigger questions about the soul, God and the afterlife.

Tagore knows himself with incredible clarity and confidence. He knows that his true home is eternity. He isn't going anywhere after he dies, because infinity has no place to go and eternity has no past or future.

Science has come along to verify this very notion. Material things are solid to the touch, but at the quantum level every atom is 99.999% empty space, and solidity dissolves into a bundle of vibrating energy. This energy was never created and can never be destroyed. It flickers in and out of the pre-quantum region millions of times per second. In a very real sense, this is the only birth and the only death we will ever experience. Far from death being a unique event, our bodies die a hundred times before your eye can read a single word of this sentence. What we call 'death' is a misnomer: it is just the cessation of one process and the appearance of another. With our last breath we go back to where there is no time. What we call 'dying' is the giving up of birth and death together.

At this moment our body could not be alive without death. Billions of cells have to perish to bring new ones to life. We could not think or feel or dream if our mind did not allow our old thoughts to die away and make room for the new. So it is a myth to think that death is out there waiting to take us. Death is here with us, tied into the flow of life. There is a wonderful saying, "You

will never be more alive than you are at this moment, and you will never be more dead than you are this moment."

Your goal, then, should be to experience yourself as fully now as you can, and in doing that you will make peace with any fear, any doubt, any resistance. Don't see yourself as struggling to remain alive against all obstacles; see yourself as a river that accepts all change because change is natural as you move from one life stage to the next. How amazing that Tagore knew this, for he said in a beautiful aphorism, "The stars are not afraid to flicker out like fireflies."

Unlike Tagore, most people do not embrace the region beyond material existence. It is sealed off from us by a wall. The wall was built by the five senses, which make us trust things we can touch and see, and distrust what we cannot. We can't scale this wall or smash through it, so we imagine all sorts of horror on the other side. Tagore saw through the wall, however, as if it were transparent. What he saw looming on the other side wasn't heaven or hell or even a personified God. He gave us a paradox – he saw the unknown that he always knew.

To me, he could mean only one thing: we are already as involved with death as we will ever be. We are surrounded by

There is a wisdom in his poems that makes death a richer experience than birth

eternity; the horizon is infinite in all directions. At the most primordial level of existence we participate in a timeless reality. Why wait for a crisis, the moment of dying, to explore the infinite and eternal? They are available every day. This is the realm of time that Tagore never forgot to pay attention to. He doesn't 'solve' the mystery of death; he lays it before us in all its paradox. He speaks of the timeless with the awe that befits anyone who must, after all, live in time.

Tagore also teaches us that perspective is all. Whether we can solve death's mystery or not, certainly we can start living in it. We can become more kind and considerate by seeing ourselves under the aspect of eternity. We can touch the fringes of the unknown by our own delving into love.

Because Tagore links death to birth, there is a childlike tone to dying in these poems, but also a wisdom that makes death a richer experience than birth. Many books have offered solace to those who are facing death, but here is an opening to wise innocence. His words are so primal – we have all used them since we were five or six years old – yet what magic emerges when Tagore combines them, as in this little verse I've entitled A Kiss:

The night kissed the fading day
With a whisper.
I am death, your mother,
From me you will get new birth.

Tagore's poems always touch the innocence that is ever present in us. To realise that death is an illusion, you either have to be very sophisticated or very simple.

Tagore was both.

R

Deepak Chopra will be speaking at The Tagore Festival on 6 May. For details visit www.tagorefestival.com

Editor's note: We were sorry to hear of the recent death of contributor and friend of Resurgence, Sohan Qadri, the artist featured in this article and in previous issues of the magazine.



The World of Alipana, 1950, by Jamini Roy, from the collection of the Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Needham/www.harn.ufl.edu

A Vision to Serve

Tagore believed in the transformative power of poetry and the arts. Here is a selection of his poems chosen by **Satish Kumar**

Rabindranath Tagore was an Earth activist, as well as a spiritual and social activist. His poetry and plays, his songs and stories, his talks and teachings, his imagination and creativity were all underpinned by a vision to serve the Earth, lift the spirit and transform society. Tagore celebrated the beauty,

integrity and generosity of life on Earth manifested in myriad forms. He went beyond art for art's sake or art for self-expression – even beyond art for entertainment. He encouraged the idea of art for self-awakening and for the transformation of consciousness, for enlightening the soul, and most of all for changing the world.

R

Satish Kumar is Resurgence magazine's Editor-in-Chief.

Farewell to Heaven (extract)

And gods, goddesses, today I must
say goodbye to heaven. Gladly have I spent
many millennia in the kingdom of the gods
as one of the immortals, and had hoped to see
at this parting-hour a hint of tears
in heaven's eyes. But heartless, void of grief,
indifferent, this happy celestial land
just looks on.

...
Stay laughing, heaven. Gods, keep drinking your nectar.
Heaven is indeed your very own place of bliss,
where we are aliens. Earth – she is no heaven,
but she's a motherland; that's why her eyes
stream with tears, if after a few days
anyone leaves her even for a few hours.
The humble, the meek, the most incompetent,
sinners and sick men – all she would hold tight
in an eager embrace, fastened to her soft breast,
such is the pleasure a mother gets from the touch
of her children's dusty bodies. So let there flow
nectar in heaven, and on earth let love,
for ever mixed with pains and pleasures, stream,
keeping earth's heaven-spots evergreen with tears.

Mind Without Fear

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action...
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Renunciation

Said a man fed up with the world in the depth of night,
'I'll leave home tonight for the sake of the God I adore.
Who's it that keeps me ensnared with this house?'
'I,' said God, but it didn't enter his ears.
Clasping their sleeping infant to her breast,
his wife lay happily asleep on a side of the bed.
'Who are you all, maya's masks?' he asked.
'They are myself,' said God, but no one heard.
'Lord where are you?' said the man, leaving his bed.
'Right here,' was the answer, but still the fellow was deaf.
The child cried in his sleep and clung to his mother.
'Return,' said God, but the man didn't hear the order.
Then at last God sighed. 'Alas,' said He,
'where's my devotee going, leaving me?'

An Ordinary Person

A stick under his arm, a pack on his head,
at dusk a villager goes home along the river.
If after a hundred centuries somehow –
by some magic – from the past's kingdom of death
this peasant could be resurrected, again made flesh,
with this stick under his arm and surprise in his eyes,
then would crowds besiege him on all sides,
everyone snatching every word from his lips.
His joys and sorrows, attachments and loves,
his neighbours, his own household,
his fields, cattle, methods of farming: all
they would take in greedily and still it wouldn't be enough.
His life-story, today so ordinary,
will, in those days, seem charged with poetry.

A Visual Expression

Tagore ventured into the world of painting quite late in life, writes Sanjoy Kumar Mallik

The multifarious personality of Rabindranath Tagore covered diverse terrains of creative expression, but he ventured into the world of painting quite late in life. The pages of his manuscript titled *Purabi*, a book of poems published in 1924, is conventionally identified as the first evidence of articulation through fully fledged visual images. In the process of editing and altering the text

Nature's mysteries unfurl before us through the liquid tones of colour

of these poems, he began joining together the struck-out words in rhythmic patterns of linear scribbles, with the result that these connected erasures emerged into consolidated, fantastic visual forms.

About this process, he later wrote: "I had come to know that rhythm gives reality to that which is desultory, which is insignificant in itself. And

therefore, when the scratches in my manuscript cried like sinners for salvation, and assailed my eyes with the ugliness of their irrelevance, I often took more time in rescuing them into a merciful finality of rhythm than in carrying on what was my obvious task."

The Purabi corrective cancellations, deleting the unnecessary and unwanted, finally fused together into a unity of design; but more than that, this rhythmic interrelationship gave birth to a host of unique forms, most often curious and grotesque.

This nearly subconscious birth of forms, springing up unpremeditated on the sheet of paper, is a necessary corollary to the poet's innate concern with rhythm. It was not the sheer delectable beauty of swirling arabesques that interested the poet, but the emergent unpredictable that delighted him.

These creatures may certainly defy classification according to strict conventions of zoology, but they are very much valid as entities in a painter's world. They even possess distinctly identifiable moods, emotions and characteristics, such that they become personalities, rather than blank-forms.

The manuscript is a private and personal domain; as the presence of these emergent forms began to demand more independent existence, the poet-painter turned to full-scale paintings. However, having originated from the subconscious playfulness of the erasures, somewhat unfortunately and for a considerable time Tagore's pictorial practice tended to carry the stigma of being a dilettante's dabble.

Although Tagore did not possess any academic initiation into the domain of the visual arts, he did, as most children do, take lessons in painting in his childhood. In his reminiscences *Chelebela* ('My Childhood Days') he recalled how in the interminable sequence of home instructors, an art teacher would immediately step in when the instructor in physical education had just left.

While that may not have inspired his later indulgence in the visual arts, in *Jeebansmriti* ('My Reminiscences') Tagore recorded a slightly different childhood memory: at bedtime, he would stare at the patterns of peeling whitewash on the walls, and these would induce a range of visual forms in his imagination as he drifted off to sleep.

By 1930, Tagore was relatively confident as a painter. In a letter from Paris addressed to his niece Indira Devi (1873–1960), he wrote that it would surprise her to learn the entire story of how the once-poet Rabindranath's current identity was that of a painter, though he would rather modestly wait for posterity to bear that news to her rather than declare his own achievements. He went on to mention that the inauguration of his exhibition was scheduled for May 2nd 1930 – that the harvest at the year end had been collected together on these foreign shores. But, he wrote, he would prefer to leave them behind, considering it fortunate that he had been able to cross over with them from the ferry wharf of his own land.

Tagore's acclaim from the series of foreign exhibitions has been the other long-standing cause for suspicion of indulgent praise. What counters these doubts is the consistency of his pictorial quest and the enormous output – scholars claim that he had brought along



Cockerel, by Rabindranath Tagore, courtesy Nirmalya Kumar

as many as 400 paintings for the 1930 exhibitions.

What is of interest, beyond the numbers, is the choices exercised by Tagore as a painter. In a period when nationalist revivalism was triumphant in the country, he had the strength of will to propose a larger vision beyond the restrictive criteria of national/geographical boundaries in matters of creative expression.

In fact, it is tempting to view Tagore's pictorial practice against the phrase that assumed the role of a guiding motto for Visva-Bharati, the university he instituted: *yatra viśva bhavati eka nidam* – 'where the whole world comes to meet in a single nest'.

This catholicity distinguished Tagore's creative process, and his approach to the notion of tradition was thereby liberated. Coupled with this, his European tours had probably contributed considerably to making the art of those lands a directly felt experience.

But even when one identified, for instance, echoes of the expressionistic in Tagore's paintings, the images in their ultimate totality of visual language are so utterly individual that they defy categorisation into the straitjackets of stylistic periodisation or movements in world art.

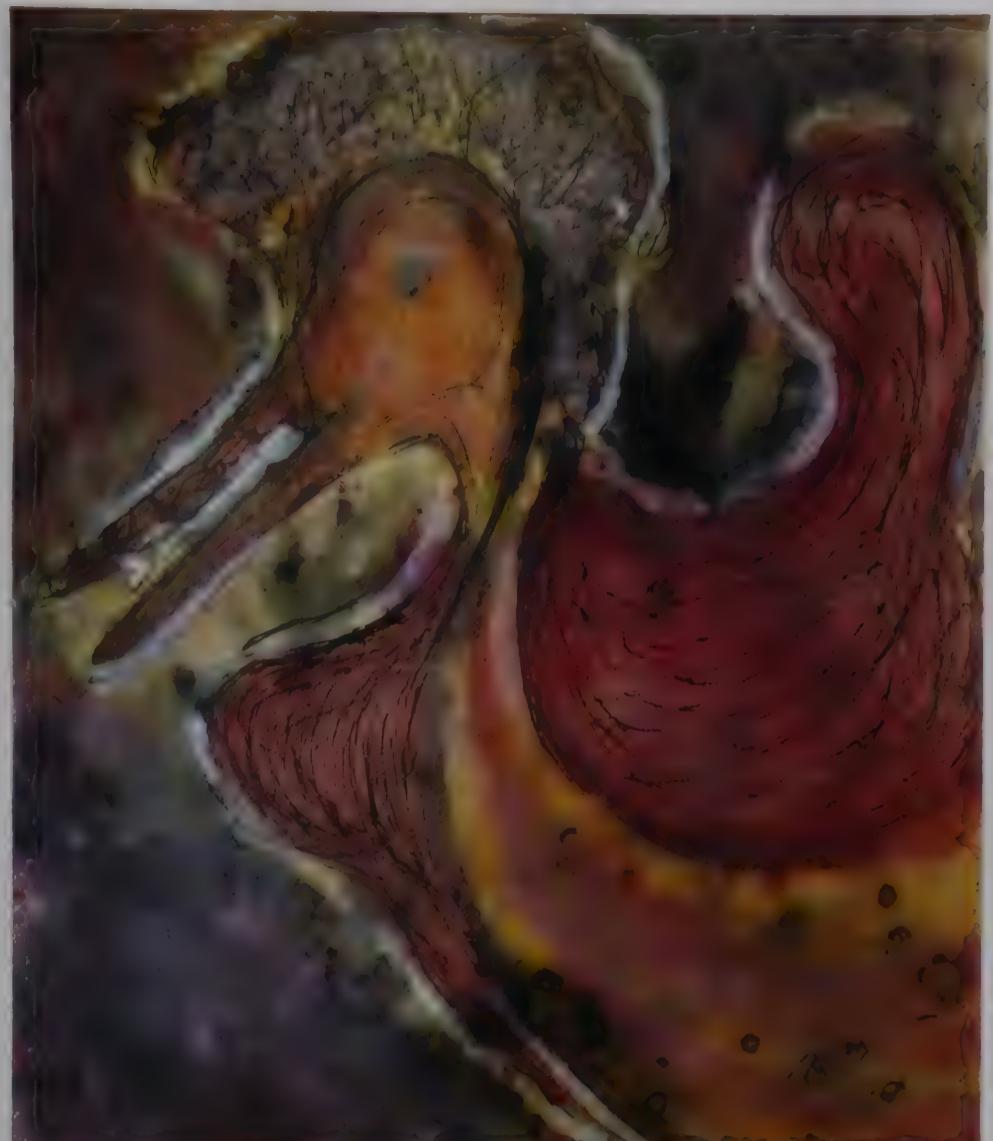
It is, therefore, necessary to comprehend Tagore's choice of themes in conjunction with, and as a logical corollary of, his choice in the realm of pictorial language. Not only did he opt not to hark back to past pictorial traditions, but he also rejected associations of the literary.

Even when his pictorial compositions deal with dramatic ensembles of multiple human figures, the narrative is entirely contained within the perimeter of the painted page, without drawing direct reference to literary allusions, whether belonging to a shared tradition or to those of Tagore's own creation.

What unfolds in front of the viewer of these paintings is a narrative told exclusively through visual language – and meant to be read as such. The pictures that Tagore drew for his own books are in the true spirit of illuminations, independent expressions in their own right – complementary, rather than supplementary, to the text.

Then there are faces – both male and female – and these are not allusive portraits standing in for an individual. They may have taken off from a particular individual, but in the final rendering they become character studies rather than visual impressions. Thus they do not lack personality but instead have distinctly personal presences, with expressions ranging from the sullen and the sombre to the calm and contained, and rare instances of the joyful or the merry. However, whatever the particular expression, the painted faces invariably exude a feeling of untold mystery, as if the whole of a personality is beyond comprehension.

Very similarly, Tagore's landscapes are hardly descriptive passages, such that it may be nearly



Bird, by Rabindranath Tagore

Image: courtesy Nirmalya Kumar

impossible to determine the inspiring source in actual locations. Nonetheless, some of the glowing yellow skies behind the silhouette of trees in the foreground must invariably be the result of Nature's manifestation at Santiniketan. Once again, despite a broadly general identification, the landscapes remain largely non-specific. These paintings are rendered with a dominant tone of chromatic emotions, where Nature's mysteries unfurl before us through the liquid tones of colour.

But, above all, what draws our attention from amongst Tagore's entire collection is a series of reworked photographs. The front cover of the May 1943 issue of Visva-Bharati News carried a photo-portrait of Tagore. A number of these covers were painted over by him in pen and ink, pastel and watercolour, transforming each of the faces into distinctly differing identities. In many of these, the ink scribbles and colour tones spare the eyes, which continue to glow piercingly out from beneath the cloak of pictorial transformation, but in a few he even painted over those.

Not only does this exercise address the issue of the 'real' as an illusory appearance that substitutes an object, but it also introduces within the same debate the issue of identity, especially when one realises that a couple of these reworked faces tend to look distinctly feminine.

Addressing questions of considerably wider implications than those that were of immediate concern to his contemporaries in the field of visual arts, Tagore personified a vision of much larger dimension. Approaching pictorial language from the vantage point of a wider horizon, he indexed a direction and a possibility in pictorial practice that were exemplary within the modern in Indian art.

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Photo by Steve McCurry

Photo: Steve McCurry/Magnum Photos

Kabuliwallah

by Rabindranath Tagore

My five-year-old daughter Mini can't stop talking for a minute. It only took her a year to learn to speak, after coming into the world, and ever since she has not wasted a minute of her waking hours by keeping silent. Her mother often scolds her and makes her shut up, but I can't do that. When Mini is quiet, it is so unnatural that I cannot bear it. So she's rather keen on chatting to me.

One morning, as I was starting the seventeenth chapter of my novel, Mini came up to me and said, "Father, Ramdoyal the gatekeeper calls a crow a *kāuyā* instead of a *kāk*. He doesn't know anything, does he!"

Before I had a chance to enlighten her about the multiplicity of languages in the world, she brought up another subject. "Guess what, Father, Bhola says it rains when an elephant in the sky squirts water through its trunk. What nonsense he talks! On and on, all day."

Without waiting for my opinion on this matter either, she suddenly asked, "Father, what relation is Mother to you?"

"Good question," I said to myself, but to Mini I said, "Run off and play with Bhola. I've got work to do."

But then she sat down near my feet beside my writing-table, and, slapping her knees, began to recite '*āgdum bāgdum*' at top speed. Meanwhile, in my seventeenth chapter, Pratap Singh was leaping under cover of night from his high prison window into the river below, with Kanchanmala in his arms.

My study looks out onto the road. Mini suddenly abandoned the '*āgdum bāgdum*' game, ran over to the window and shouted "Kabuliwallah, Kabuliwallah!"

Dressed in dirty baggy clothes, pugree on his head, bag hanging from his shoulder, and with three or four boxes of grapes in his hands, a tall Kabuliwallah was ambling along the road. It was hard to say exactly what thoughts the sight of him had put into my beloved daughter's mind, but she began to shout and shriek at him. That swinging bag spells trouble, I thought: my seventeenth chapter won't get finished today. But just as the Kabuliwallah, attracted by Mini's yells, looked towards us with a smile and started to approach our house, Mini gasped and ran into the inner rooms, disappearing from view. She had a blind conviction that if one looked inside that swinging bag one would find three or four live children like her.

Meanwhile the Kabuliwallah came up to the window and smilingly salaamed. I decided that

although the plight of Pratap Singh and Kanchanmala was extremely critical, it would be churlish not to invite the fellow inside and buy something from him.

I bought something. Then I chatted to him for a bit. We talked about Abdur Rahman's efforts to preserve the integrity of Afghanistan against the Russians and the British. When he got up to leave, he asked, "Babu, where did your little girl go?"

To dispel her groundless fears, I called Mini to come out. She clung to me and looked suspiciously at the Kabuliwallah and his bag. The Kabuliwallah took some raisins and apricots out and offered them to her, but she would not take them, and clung to my knees with double suspicion. Thus passed her first meeting with Kabuliwallah.

Afew days later when for some reason I was on my way out of the house one morning, I saw my daughter sitting on a bench in front of the door, nattering unrestrainedly; and the Kabuliwallah was sitting at her feet listening – grinning broadly, and from time to time making comments in his hybrid sort of Bengali. In all her five years of life, Mini had never found so patient a listener, apart from her father. I also saw that the fold of her little sari was crammed with raisins and nuts. I said to the Kabuliwallah, "Why have you given all these? Don't give her any more." I then took a half-rupee out of my pocket and gave it to him. He unhesitatingly took the coin and put it in his bag.

When I returned home, I found that this half-rupee had caused a full-scale row. Mini's mother was holding up a round shining object and saying crossly to Mini, "Where did you get this half-rupee from?"

"The Kabuliwallah gave it to me," said Mini.

"Why did you take it from the Kabuliwallah?" said her mother.

"I didn't ask for it," said Mini tearfully, "He gave it to me himself."

I rescued Mini from her mother's wrath, and took her outside. I learnt that this was not just the second time that Mini and the Kabuliwallah had met: he had been coming nearly every day and by bribing her eager little heart with pistachio nuts, had quite won her over. I found they now had certain fixed jokes and routines: for example as soon as Mini saw Rahamat, she giggled and asked, "Kabuliwallah, O Kabuliwallah, what have you got in your bag?" Rahamat would laugh back and say – giving the word a peculiar nasal twang – "An elephant." The notion of an elephant in his bag

was the source of immense hilarity; it might not be a very subtle joke, but they both seemed to find it very funny and it gave me pleasure to see, on an autumn morning, a young child and a grown man laughing so heartily.

They had a couple of other jokes. Rahamat would say to Mini, "Little one, don't ever go off to your *śvaśur-bāṛi*." Most Bengali girls grow up hearing frequent references to their *śvaśur-bāṛi*, but my wife and I are rather progressive people and we don't keep talking to our young daughter about her future marriage. She therefore couldn't clearly understand what Rahamat meant; yet to remain silent and give no reply was wholly against her nature, so she would turn the idea around and say, "Are you going to your *śvaśur-bāṛi*?" Shaking his huge fist at an imaginary father-in-law Rahamat said, "I'll settle him!" Mini laughed merrily as she imagined the fate awaiting this unknown creature called a *śvaśur*.

It was perfect autumn weather. In ancient times, kings used to set out on their world-conquests in autumn. I have never been away from Calcutta; precisely because of that, my mind roves all over the world. I seem to be condemned to my house, but I constantly yearn for the world outside. If I hear the name of a foreign land, at once my heart races towards it; if I see a foreigner, at once an image of a cottage on some far bank or wooded mountainside forms in my mind, and I think of the free and pleasant life I would lead there. At the same time, I am such a rooted sort of individual that whenever I have to leave my familiar spot I practically collapse. So a morning spent sitting at my table in my little study, chatting with this Kabuliwallah, was quite enough wandering for me. High, scorched, blood-coloured forbidding mountains on either side of a narrow desert path; laden camels passing, turbaned merchants and wayfarers, some on camels, some walking, some with spears in their hands, some with old-fashioned flintlock guns: my friend would talk of his native land in his booming, broken Bengali, and a mental picture of it would pass before my eyes.

Mini's mother is very easily alarmed. The slightest noise in the street makes her think that all the world's drunkards are charging straight at our house. She cannot dispel from her mind – despite her

experience of life (which isn't great) – the apprehension that the world is overrun with thieves, bandits, drunkards, snakes, tigers, malaria, caterpillars, cockroaches and white-skinned mauraunders. She was not too happy about Rahamat the Kabuliwallah. She repeatedly told me to keep a close eye on him. If I tried to laugh off her suspicions, she would launch into a succession of questions: "So do people's children never go missing? And is there no slavery in Afghanistan? Is it completely impossible for a huge Afghan to kidnap a little child?" I had to admit that it was not impossible, but I found it hard to believe. People are suggestible to varying degrees; this was why my wife remained so edgy. But I still saw nothing wrong in letting Rahamat come to our house.

Every year, about the middle of the month of Māgh, Rahamat went home. He was always very busy before he left, collecting money owed to him. He had to go from house to house; but he still made time to visit Mini. To see them together, one might well suppose they were plotting something. If he couldn't come in the morning he would come in the evening; to see his lanky figure in a corner of the darkened house, with his baggy pyjamas hanging loosely around him, was indeed a little frightening. But my heart would light up as Mini ran to meet him, smiling and calling, "O Kabuliwallah, Kabuliwallah," and the usual innocent jokes passed between the two friends, unequal in age though they were.

One morning, I was sitting in my little study correcting proof-sheets. The last days of winter had been very cold, shiveringly so. The morning sun was shining through the window onto my feet below my table and this touch of warmth was very pleasant. It must have been about eight o'clock – early-morning walkers, swathed in scarves, had mostly finished their dawn stroll and had returned to their homes. It was then that there was a sudden commotion in the street.

I looked out and saw our Rahamat in handcuffs, being marched along by two policemen, and behind him a crowd of curious boys. Rahamat's clothes were blood-stained, and one of the policemen was holding a blood-soaked knife. I went outside and stopped him, asking what was up. I heard partly from him and partly from Rahamat himself that a neighbour of ours had owed Rahamat something for a Rampuri *chadar*; he had tried to lie his way



My heart would light up as Mini ran to him calling "O Kabuliwallah, Kabuliwallah."



Photo: © Karoki Lewis/ Axiom

out of the debt, and in the ensuing brawl Rahamat had stabbed him.

Rahamat was mouthing various unrepeatable curses against the lying debtor, when Mini ran out of the house calling, "Kabuliwallah, O Kabuliwallah." For a moment Rahamat's face lit up with pleasure. He had no bag over his shoulder today, so they couldn't have their usual discussion about it. Mini came straight out with her

"Are you going to your śvaśur-bāṛi?"

"Yes, I'm going there now," said Rahamat with a smile. But when he saw that his reply had failed to amuse Mini,

he brandished his handcuffed fists and said, "I would have killed my śvaśur, but how can I with these on?"

Rahamat was convicted of assault and sent to prison for several years. He virtually faded from our minds. Living at home, carrying on day by day with our routine tasks, we gave no thought to how a free-spirited mountain-dweller was passing his years behind prison walls. As for the fickle Mini, even her father would have to admit that her behaviour was not very praiseworthy. She swiftly forgot her old friend. At first, Nabi the groom replaced him in her affections; later, as she grew up, girls rather than little boys became her

favourite companions. She even stopped coming to her father's study. And I, in a sense, dropped her.

Several years went by. It was autumn again. Mini's marriage had been decided, and the wedding was fixed for the puja-holiday. Our pride and joy would soon, like Durga going to Mount Kailas, darken her parents' house by moving to her husband's.

It was a most beautiful morning. Sunlight, washed clean by monsoon rains, seemed to shine with the purity of smelted gold. Its radiance lent an extraordinary grace to Calcutta's back streets, with their squalid, tumbledown, cheek-by-jowl dwellings. The *sānī* started to play in our house when night was scarcely over. Its wailing vibrations seemed to rise from deep within my ribcage. Its sad *Bhairavi raga* joined forces with the autumn sunshine in spreading through the world the grief of my imminent separation. Today my Mini would be married.

From dawn on, there was uproar, endless coming and going. A canopy was being erected in the yard of the house, by binding bamboo poles together; chandeliers tinkled as they were hung in the rooms and verandahs; there was constant loud talk.

I was sitting in my study doing accounts, when Rahamat suddenly appeared and salaamed before me. At first, I didn't recognise him. He had no bag; he had lost his long hair; his former vigour had gone. But when he smiled, I recognised him.

"How are you, Rahamat?" I said. "When did you come?"

"I was let out of prison yesterday evening," he replied.

His words startled me. I had never confronted a would-be murderer before; I shrank back at the sight of him. I began to feel that on this auspicious morning it would be better to have the man out of the way. "We've got something on in our house today," I said. "I'm rather busy. Please go now."

He was ready to go at once but just as he reached the door he hesitated a little and said, "Can't I see your little girl for a moment?"

It seemed he thought that Mini was still just as she was when he had known her: that she would come running as before, calling "Kabuliwallah, O Kabuliwallah!"; that their old merry banter would resume. He had even brought (remembering their old friendship) a box of grapes and a few nuts and raisins wrapped in paper — extracted, no doubt, from some Afghan friend of his, having no bag of his own now.

"There's something on in the house today," I said. "You can't see anyone."

He looked rather crestfallen. He stood silently for a moment longer, casting a solemn glance at me; then, saying, "Babu salaam", he walked towards the door. I felt a sudden pang. I thought of calling him back, but then I saw that he himself was returning.

"I brought this box of grapes and these nuts and raisins for the little one," he said. "Please give them to her." Taking them from him, I was about to pay

him for them when he suddenly clasped my arm and said, "Please, don't give me any money — I shall always be grateful, Babu. Just as you have a daughter, so do I have one, in my own country. It is with her in mind that I came with a few raisins for your daughter: I didn't come to trade with you."

Then he put a hand inside his big loose shirt and took out from somewhere close to his heart a crumpled piece of paper. Unfolding it very carefully, he spread it out on my table. There was a small handprint on the paper: not a photograph, not a painting — the hand had been rubbed with some soot and pressed down onto the paper. Every year, Rahamat carried this memento of his daughter in his breast pocket when he came to sell raisins in Calcutta's streets: as if the touch of that soft, small childish hand brought solace to his huge, homesick breast. My eyes swam at the sight of it. I forgot then that he was an Afghan raisin-seller and I was a Bengali Babu. I understood then that he was as I am, that he was a father, just as I am a father. The handprint of his little mountain-dwelling Parvati reminded me of my own Mini.

At once, I sent for her from the inner part of the house. Objections came back: I refused to listen to them. Mini, dressed as a bride — sandal-paste pattern on her brow, red silk sari — came timidly into the room and stood close by me.

The Kabuliwallah was confused at first when he saw her: he couldn't bring himself to utter his old greeting. But at last he smiled and said, "Little one, are you going to your *śvaśur-bārī*?"

Mini now knew the meaning of *śvaśur-bārī*; she couldn't reply as before — she blushed at Rahamat's question and looked away. I recalled the day when Mini and the Kabuliwallah had first met. My heart ached.

Mini left the room, and Rahamat, sighing deeply, sat down on the floor. He suddenly understood clearly that his own daughter would have grown up too since he last saw her, and with her too he would have to become re-acquainted: he would not find her exactly as she was before. Who knew what had happened to her these eight years? In the cool autumn morning sunshine *sānī* went on playing, and Rahamat sat in a Calcutta lane and pictured to himself the barren mountains of Afghanistan.

I took out a banknote and gave it to him. "Rahamat," I said, "Go back to your homeland and your daughter; by your blessed reunion Mini will be blessed."

By giving him this money, I had to trim certain items from the wedding festivities. I wasn't able to afford the electric illuminations I had planned, nor did the trumpet-and-drum band come. The womenfolk were very displeased at this; but for me, the ceremony was lit by a kinder, more gracious light.

R

Kabuliwallah is one of 30 short stories written by Tagore and translated by William Radice for the Penguin Classic Rabindranath Tagore. ISBN: 9780140449839

I slept and dreamt that life
was joy. I awoke and saw that
life was service. I acted and
behold, service was joy.

...

He who wants to do good
knocks at the gate; he who
loves finds the gate open.

...

I have become my own
version of an optimist. If I can't
make it through one door, I'll
go through another door – or
I'll make a door. Something
terrific will come no matter
how dark the present.

Rabindranath Tagore

Forests and



Nature Study (oil on canvas), by Morris Berd
Image: The Barnes Foundation, Merion, USA/The Bridgeman Art Library

Forests were central to Tagore's works, just as they have been for India's creative expression through centuries, writes Vandana Shiva

Tagore started Santiniketan as a Tapovan – a forest school – both to take inspiration from Nature and to create an Indian Renaissance.

He wrote, in *An Eastern University*: "The unfortunate people who have lost the harvest of their past have lost their present age. They have missed their seed for cultivation, and go begging for their bare livelihood. We must not imagine that we are one of

those disinherited peoples of the world. The time has come for us to break open the treasure trove of our ancestors, and use it for our commerce of life. Let us, with its help, make our future our own, and not continue our existence as the eternal rag-pickers in other people's dustbins."

Tagore encouraged his secretary, Leonard Elmhirst, to start a Santiniketan-like school in England. This is how The Dartington Hall Trust was established, from which grew Schumacher College, the first green college in the West. And back in India, Navdanya's Bija Vidyapeeth was started by Satish Kumar and me as a sister institution of Schumacher College. All these institutions are thus connected, through the inspiration of Tagore, to the ancient culture of the forest.

These learning centres are teaching freedom and Earth Democracy in times of multiple crises intensified by globalisation. Today, just as in Tagore's time, we need to turn to the forest for lessons in freedom.

As Tagore wrote in *The Religion of the Forest*, the ideal of perfection preached by the forest dwellers of ancient India runs through the heart of our classical literature and still influences our minds. The forests are sources of water and the storehouse of a biodiversity that can teach us the lessons of democracy; of leaving space for others whilst drawing sustenance from the common web of life.

In his essay *Tapovan* ('Forest of Purity'), Tagore writes: "Indian civilisation has been distinctive in locating its source of regeneration, material and intellectual, in the forest, not the city. India's best ideas have come where man was in communion with trees and rivers and lakes, away from the crowds. The peace of the forest has helped the intellectual evolution of man. The culture of the forest has fuelled the culture of Indian society. The culture that has arisen from the forest has been influenced by the diverse processes of renewal of life, which are always at play in the forest, varying from species to

Freedom

species, from season to season, in sight and sound and smell. The unifying principle of life in diversity, of democratic pluralism, thus became the principle of Indian civilisation."

It is this 'unity in diversity' that is the basis of both ecological sustainability and democracy. Diversity without unity becomes the source of conflict and contest. Uniformity without diversity becomes the ground for external control. This is true of both Nature and culture. The forest is a unity in its diversity, and we are united with Nature through our relationship with the forest.

In Tagore's writings, the forest was not just the source of knowledge and freedom: it was the source of beauty and joy, of art and aesthetics, of harmony and perfection. It symbolised the universe. In *The Religion of the Forest*, the poet says that our attitude of mind "guides our attempts to establish relations with the universe either by conquest or by union, either through the cultivation of power or through that of sympathy".

The forest teaches us union and compassion.

For Tagore, our relationship with the forest and Nature is a relationship that allows us to experience our humanity. He writes: "In all our dramas...Nature stands on her own right, proving that she has her great function, to impart the peace of the eternal to human emotions." It is this permanence, this peace, this joy of living, not by conquest and domination, but by coexistence and cooperation, that is at the heart of a forest culture.

The forest also teaches us 'enoughness': as the principle of equity, enjoying the gifts of Nature without exploitation and accumulation. In *The Religion of the Forest* Tagore quotes from the ancient texts written in the forest: "Know all that moves in this moving world as enveloped by God; and find enjoyment through renunciation, not through greed of possession."

No species in a forest appropriates the share of another species. Every species sustains itself in cooperation with others. This is Earth Democracy.

The end of consumerism and accumulation is the beginning of the joy of living. That is why the Indigenous people of contemporary India are resisting leaving their forest homes and abandoning their forest culture. The conflict between greed and compassion, conquest and cooperation, violence and harmony that Tagore wrote about continues today. And it is the forest that can show us the way

Tagore knew that the forest teaches us union and compassion

beyond this conflict by reconnecting to Nature and finding sources for our freedom.

Harmony in diversity is the nature of the forest, whereas monotonous sameness is the nature of industrialism based on a mechanical worldview. This is what Tagore saw as the difference between the West and India: "The civilisation of the West has in it the spirit of the machine which must move; and to that blind movement human lives are offered as fuel."

Globalisation has created a civilisation that is based on power and greed and the spirit of the machine worldwide. A civilisation based on power and greed is a civilisation based on violence. In *The Spirit of Freedom*, Tagore warned: "The people who have sacrificed their souls to the passion of profit-making and the drunkenness of power are constantly pursued by phantoms of panic and suspicion, and therefore they are ruthless...They become morally incapable of allowing freedom to others."

Greed and accumulation must lead to slavery. He went on to observe: "My experience in the West, where I have realised the immense power of money and of organised propaganda – working everywhere behind screens of camouflage, creating an atmosphere of distrust, timidity and antipathy – has impressed me deeply with the truth that real freedom is of the mind and spirit; it can never come to us from outside. He only has freedom who ideally loves freedom himself and is glad to extend it to others...he who distrusts freedom in others loses his moral right to it."

Today the rule of money and greed dominates our society, economy and politics. The culture of conquest is invading our tribal lands and forests through the mining of iron ore, bauxite and coal. Every forest area has become a war zone. Every tribe in India is defined as a 'Maoist' by a militarised corporate state appropriating the land and natural resources of the tribals. And every defender of the rights of the forest and forest dwellers is being treated as a criminal.

If India is to survive ecologically and politically, if India is to stay democratic, if each Indian citizen is to be guaranteed a livelihood, we need to give up the road of conquest and destruction and take the road of union and conservation; we need to cultivate peace and compassion instead of power and violence. We need to turn, once again, to the forest as our perennial teacher of peace and freedom, of diversity and democracy. This will be the greatest tribute to Tagore. India needs to do more than pay lip service to this great visionary. We need to follow his ideals.

R

Vandana Shiva is the author of *Earth Democracy* and *Soil, Not Oil*. She is speaking at the Tagore Festival on 7 May.



Rethinking Conservation

Drainer's Dyke, which is probably the oldest to run across the Sedge Fen at Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire

Photo: © NTPL/Joe Cornish

The time is ripe for a new relationship with the natural world and here, at the National Trust, we will help lead the way, promises **Fiona Reynolds**

Octavia Hill, one of the founders of the National Trust, observed in 1895 that "the need of quiet, the need of air, the need of exercise, the sight of sky and of things growing seem human needs, common to all men". She argued that access to beauty was as important as a roof over one's head or enough to eat. She and her fellow founders devoted their lives to safeguarding Nature and beauty for a nation that, through the Industrial Revolution, was increasingly being deprived of it.

What is fascinating today is the growing body of research that supports these pioneers' intuitive understanding of the human condition with the backing of hard science. Study after study shows the hugely positive impact that time spent in Nature (in both a rural and an urban context) has on key social indicators. From the creativity of children to the increased social engagement of older people, from its impact on domestic crime and depression, we are seeing researchers confirming what in our hearts we have always known: humans need Nature not only to survive, but to thrive.

The last 115 years, however, have not been kind to the natural environment in Britain, and the intuition of people like Octavia Hill has not proved a sufficient basis for us to truly value the physical and spiritual refreshment we all get from our surroundings. Over the last century, our ecosystems have degraded, and as they have done so we have increasingly removed and disconnected ourselves from them. The 'extinction of natural experience', a phrase coined by American ecologist and author Robert Pyle, is no less pressing a concern here in Britain than across the Atlantic. Indeed, we know that our grandparents roamed more freely as children than our parents did; that our parents roamed more freely than we did; and that the next generation is restricted yet further. The distance children now stray from their homes has decreased by an astonishing 90% since the 1970s.

As this disconnect has happened, we have witnessed the consequences in both our bodies and our minds. Our well-documented problems with obesity, for example, now cost the National Health Service a staggering £4.3 billion every year. And the state of our mental health is even more serious: we are now a nation where one in four adults will experience clinical mental illness in their lifetime, a figure that carries an estimated annual cost of £77 billion to the wider UK economy.

Exactly what proportion of this is due to our withdrawal from Nature is unclear; we can be sure, though, that it is a significant factor.

Despite the gravity of the situation, however, we now have a powerful moment of opportunity.

Can we be the generation to turn this situation around? The generation that stops the inexorable decline and turns Nature net loss into Nature net gain? And – just as importantly – reconnects all people with Nature again? That, and nothing less, is the challenge now facing us.

The time is ripe for a reassessment of the role of the natural environment in our national life, and the science is there to give us a platform. What we need is a revolution in the role of Nature in public policy. No longer will it be possible to set questions of outdoor space in urban and rural planning to one side in a box labelled 'green issues'. No longer can outdoor learning be a minority concern in our education system, an occasional indulgence at the edge of learning. No longer can health strategies focus myopically on pharmaceutical treatment, to the exclusion of natural prevention. These things must move to the centre. Nature must take its rightful place at the heart of our thinking.

As the largest private landowner in the country, the National Trust can and must play a vital role in this revolution, and we are more than ready to do so. We already welcome half a million schoolchildren a year to our properties as part of a formal learning experience, but we can and will do much more for the next generation. With over 700 miles of coastal path, and thousands more inland, we already provide a great resource for walking and other pursuits, but we will develop our role here, as well as identifying further opportunities to cycle, camp and explore the outdoors.

In recent months, we successfully added our not inconsiderable voice to the collective and growing protest in Britain against any move to sell off our national forests and nature reserves. Perhaps most fundamentally, though, we ourselves are rethinking and expanding what we mean by conservation, never diminishing our focus on high-quality conservation management, but now embracing an approach that recognises the deep connections between conservation and people.

Our work at Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire is a good example of this.

Wicken is one of the country's first-ever nature reserves, acquired by the National Trust in 1902 to help preserve the remnants of Britain's traditional fenland. But Wicken's early protectors could never have foreseen the dramatic changes of the 20th century that resulted in intensive farming being carried out right up to its boundaries. It required heroic efforts to maintain water levels in the fen, and, sadly, we were witnessing a steady loss of species. By the 1990s we were calling that precious patch of fen and sedge our "nature reserve in a plastic bag". The fen's future could no longer be guaranteed.

We realised that action was needed – not just protection, but also vision: what we refer to as 'arms open' conservation.

Our task was to extend the reserve dramatically in order to render it ecologically viable and re-create the traditional fenland landscape that had once stretched from Cambridge to the Wash. To do this, we needed to buy land around the original area to expand it 16-fold. To succeed at such a scale, however, we had to open our arms to people too. We had to embrace the opportunity to reconnect the people of Cambridge (one of England's most densely packed and pressurised cities) with their landscape and history; and to offer a 'green lung' for a region whose population is predicted to grow faster than any other.

Ten years into our 100-year vision, Wicken has more than doubled in size and now offers a unique experience to

thousands of people in a landscape that had all but lost its sense of history. A new Walking for Health programme has been started, and both guided and self-guided visits abound, as does the local wildlife.

Nature must take its rightful place at the heart of our thinking

The new landscape is drawing species back to it – even the bitterns are back, and perhaps one day the swallowtail butterfly will also return. But there's plenty more still to be done.

And as Wicken grows, so does the National Trust as a whole. We now have 3.9 million members: seven times the membership of all the UK political parties combined, and a growth that demonstrates an enormous demand for what we do and provide. Caring for the environment, both historic and natural, is something that large numbers of people care about and want to be part of. That gives me great hope.

The time is ripe for a new approach. If we want to think and plan for the longer-term future of humankind, we need to restore a better balance between us and Nature. To do that we have to get people hooked on Nature, offering more opportunities to those who have never experienced it, and calling for the attention of those who take it for granted. We have to engender a view of Nature that is holistic – within us and all around us – not tucked away in a separate compartment of policy and practice.

The signs are that the desire is there. Now we need to make it happen. R

Fiona Reynolds is Director-General of the UK's National Trust. www.nationaltrust.org.uk



'Bug Safari' activity funday at Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire
©NTPL/David Levenson

In a recent issue of *Resurgence* (No. 257) Mukti Mitchell explains that his prototype Growers' Carbon Calculator will need to be further calibrated and fine-tuned. Well, I hope he gets on with it, because for the campaign I have in mind I require only the most accurate reading.

There was this visitor (one who – would you believe it? – had recently stepped out of an aeroplane) who commented sniffily on the luxuriance of weeds thriving on the drive (well, you'd hardly call it a drive) that approaches our house. Sniffily! Had I, at the time, already read Mukti's article, I'd have explained that those weeds on our drive were part of our carbon sequestration policy and I'd have adopted a gnomic stance to explain how all of us need to requisition every available space. If I'd then been able to produce Mukti's ergonometer (I wonder if he knows it's an ergonometer) and come up with a pinpoint reading, I would have had the high ground to myself.

This, however, is scheduled as a relatively modest contribution to our in-house action to combat global warming. Our flagship measure, the salient of our outreach policy, which you are now about to experience, resulted from my being arrested by a small-ad statement – in fact as near to a throwaway as you could ever find in the straight-speaking *Green Futures* magazine – which claimed: "A petrol-powered lawnmower causes as much air pollution in one hour as a family car in one hundred miles." Exactly the kind of definitive measurement I'm looking for from Mukti's calculator – and all the back-up I shall need when I explain to my neighbour that last summer he drove his family car 6,200 miles across his front lawn.

A universal truth, which if it hasn't already been claimed by the quantum savants will need to go down as The Second Didymus Law of... (You remember the First? I'll try to find it before this goes to press, but I remember it was a corker...) Anyway, I'm referring to the truth that the nous that fully recognises a problem is the emergent consciousness of its solution. It was the very day before being confronted by this exposé of the criminal nature of the motor mower that I had had that panic familiar to anyone who likes a bit of a lawn whilst searching yet another gardening catalogue for yet another solution to the mole question.

No nous...but then my eye is distracted to a small ad for a new-to-the-market, smooth-running, quiet and easy-to-push Hand Cylinder Mower. And then the very next day...the second law of Didymus is signed and sealed. "It's the contact-free cutting technique that makes it a joy to use." I was on the blower in a trice, and by the end of the week my high ground was extended to the lawn.

On the back of an envelope I reckon I have 300 sq yards of lawn to maintain. In my green and salad days, I'd simply doodle



Trained Tortoise, by Larry

Image: CartoonStock.com

The High Ground

John Moat looks back fondly
on his first summer with a
non-motorised lawnmower

two questions you might usefully ask yourself:

- 1 How many times have you driven all the way to buy petrol for your mower only to find you've left the can on the front step?
- 2 What has been your outlay on osteopathic treatment after your 47th and most violent attempt (so violent the starter cord snapped) to tug from somewhere in the engine a spark of life?
- 3 Have you budgeted for the prescribed annual servicing? (You'll need to allow for it being 75% more than your most realistic estimate.)
- 4 Have you fully appreciated that hauling a motor mower up the three steps to mow the small lawn outside the front door will reduce both the mower's and your life expectancy by 85%?
- 5 Are you fully prepared for the next time we meet when you might, just possibly, find my expression intolerably smug?

My mower takes 20 minutes longer to do the job. But that allows for frequent breaks to listen to the birds, or seek illumination from the composure of the slow summer clouds, or take a measure rain-check on *Test Match Special*. My new mower relays no unremitting motorised chatter, but that ebb-and-flow tunefulness of appropriate muscle-powered technology that serves to remind all the neighbouring environment of the silent sunny-slow low-carbon Elysium of once upon a time.

My new mower weighs a mere 7.6kg and is so light you can even hang it on a hook on the wall of a shed. If you were to have one and played your cards right, you could entice your friends, wife or girlfriend, to be amazed at how nicely exercised and fulfilled one feels when one has, single-handedly of course, finished mowing all the lawn. At that point you achieve exclusive tenure of the sunlounger – and *Test Match* commentary uninterrupted.

And in case you were wondering, my mower is made by GARDENA, and costs around £90.

John Moat is a poet, painter and writer.

the job with a 10" Qualcast push mower, but then, oh dear, over the next 40 years there's been an insurgency of motor mowers. Roughly an hour most weeks from April to October: 24 hours a year x 40 years = 960 hours = 96,000 miles in the family car. I have with my motor mower cut a clean swathe 3½ times round the long-suffering planet. But last summer (apart from one mow in September when I'd been away, and it had rained, and I was out of condition because I'd not been working out with my push mower) not one single ounce of carbon was emitted.

Next time you stand dazzled in the salesroom, wondering which latest mower will maximise your G&T intake and tenure of the sunlounger, there are one or

Letters to the Editors

DIFFERENT CHOICES

In Homeward Bound (Resurgence 264) there were lessons aplenty – especially for those who constantly travel the world in search of happiness, only to find that it is all around us here.

The Western idea of happiness is tragically bound up with materialism and the must-have society. Any attempt to tread an alternative path is seen as bewilderingly nebulous.

It was therefore beautifully uplifting and energising to read how Hannah Perkins moved from a constant cycle of consumption to experiencing, through a series of privations in Asia, different choices that led her finally to enjoy a lifestyle of effortless leisure and work within the glorious countryside of North Devon.

It is a wonderfully graphic example of how the ‘modern’ world can be turned on its head, from being usual to becoming unfamiliar territory within a short space of time.

David Harvey
Wiltshire

A JOY TO OWN

Mukti Mitchell (Sweet No-Things, Resurgence 263) might have added ‘buying second-hand’ to the list of pointers for low-carbon shopping. Buying something pre-owned (pre-loved) might even qualify as zero-carbon shopping! Sadly the near-ubiquity of planned obsolescence means that this aspiration is simply not possible across the board, but good second-hand purchases might also enable the sort of access to craftsmanship espoused by Grayson Perry in your special issue on Craftivism.

It was sheer frustration at the poor quality of much modern furniture (as well as the unsustainability of the timber used) that first led us to track down good used items – which had probably already passed through several sets of owners. We ended up with solid pieces, well designed and lovingly crafted, which are a joy to own.

Online marketing has made such transactions widely accessible without having to go through a dealer or auction

room if you’d prefer not to. Close cousin to the second-hand buy is recycling and refurbishment. Something worthwhile but ‘tired’ picked up on eBay can be transformed either by finding a local restorer or through some judicious DIY.

I can’t resist the cliché, but buying second-hand really does tick all the boxes: low- (or zero-) carbon; the joyful satisfaction of owning a well-crafted and durable item; the knowledge that you haven’t contributed to a passing consumerist fad...and you’ll even leave a zero-carbon legacy for the next owner!

Martin Randall
Liverpool

DEEP KNOWLEDGE

The article on the Tao by Paul Zeal (Resurgence 263) was fascinating, with its roots in understanding Nature, and its connection with various religions.

It is interesting to see how the Tao and the writings of Lao Tzu have been understood by and related to the spiritual origins of Orthodox Christianity in the equally fascinating Christ the Eternal Tao (Valaam Books, 1999). This presents a profound grasp of the universal spiritual journey, based on watchfulness (attentiveness) and humility. It was written by an Orthodox monk with a deep knowledge of Taoism and Lao Tzu.

David Taylor
by email

THE VEGAN WAY

After reading Jane Hughes’ accounts of her struggles to remain vegan in the last two issues of Resurgence, I wondered if I had been living in denial, that being a vegan was fraught with difficulties and that I ran the risk of social exclusion. But a quick check confirmed this was not the case.

In my experience people are far more knowledgeable about the issues these days. I love to cook at home, I have no difficulty getting vegan food in restaurants or pubs, and neither do I encounter dismissive comments from people when I explain my requirements, what veganism entails or my reasons for adopting it.

That last point is the crux of the matter. If you see that it is unacceptable to treat animals as commodities with all the suffering entailed it must be apparent that being vegan is the only way to extricate yourself from the killing industries since, like meat eating, vegetarianism has an equally bad outcome for animals via egg and dairy production.

Of course we all do things in our own way but if we lose sight of the main point of the exercise we founder at obstacles that with a bit of imagination are easily overcome. And I can’t imagine anyone better placed than your food columnist, Jane Hughes, to achieve this. Fingers crossed!

Vicky Bazgier
Warrington

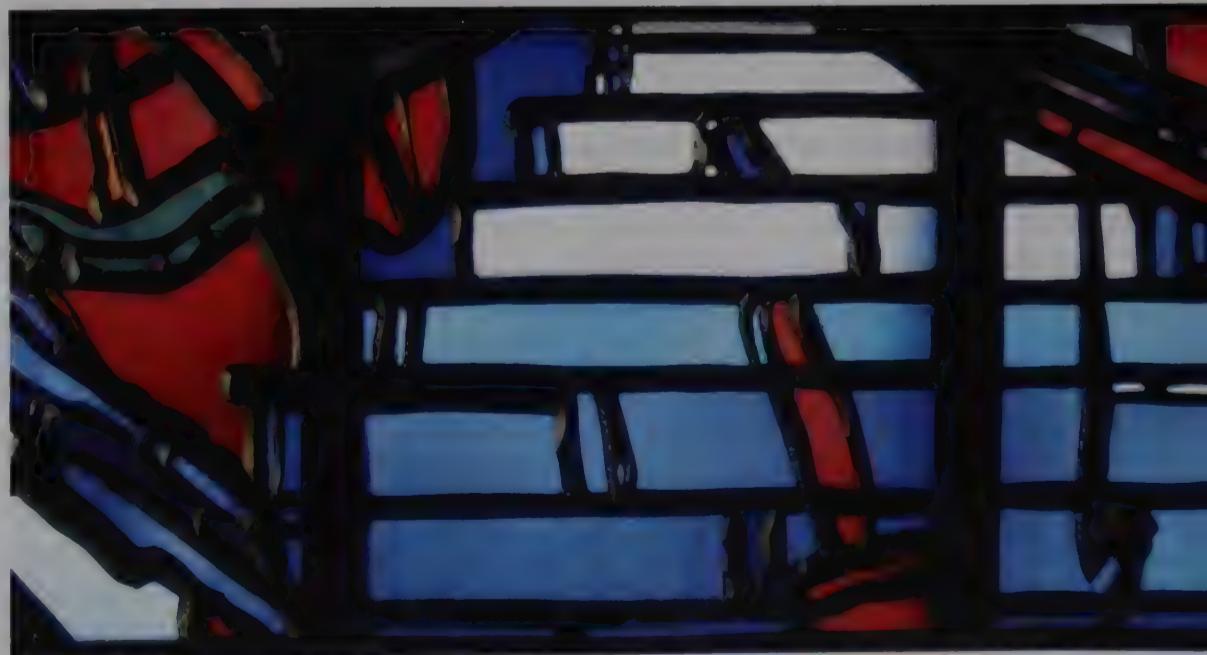


Photo: Elizabeth Wainwright

We welcome letters and emails commenting on Resurgence articles. These should include your postal address. Send your letters to: **The Editors, Resurgence, Ford House, Hartland, Bideford, Devon EX39 6EE** or email editorial@resurgence.org. Letters may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.



Image: courtesy Green Books

Rabindranath Tagore was first brought back to my attention one February afternoon at our Richmond satsang (a gathering of speakers), when Satish Kumar came to share with us his idea of a Tagore Festival and to invite us, as a group, to contribute.

I felt then both a stir and a feeling of joy passing through my heart as the thought crossed my mind that a book could be collated for an audience still unfamiliar with the beauty and graceful writings of this fine man, and thus my book *A Taste of Tagore* was born.

I know that Tagore truly called to me in a whisper to guide me in the selection of the poems, prayers, songs and contemplations that I would include in the book.

I knew from the outset that I wanted Tagore's own thoughts on certain subjects to be made known to the reader, so I revisited his many speeches and lectures and married together his thinking over a few years to give authentic voice to his thoughts on art, education, construction versus creation, international relations and, most importantly, his own life.

My memories went back to that now distant time when Tagore had first come to meet me: I was an opinionated teenager living in South Africa, with a healthy appetite for philosophy, poetry

and psychology, and I was introduced to the ideas and writings of Tagore by a respected mentor of mine.

I already had strong views on colonialism and apartheid and had set off down the 'activist route' of youth. I remembered, too, reading what Nehru said when he first heard of Tagore's passing. He was in a British jail in India at the time and stated: "Gandhi and Tagore...India's great men...[they] were supreme as human beings."

I spent some of my formative years in Durban, where Gandhi had lived for a portion of his twenty years in South Africa. During the apartheid era my English-born parents rebelled against the regime. They entertained and, in turn, were entertained in the homes of, their Indian friends – which, at that time, was a rather alien thing for 'white' people to do. But it was here in South Africa, during those debates around the dining table over many a famous 'Durban curry', that I was first exposed to the writings and thinking of these two great men. And I recall reading that the Nobel committee had passed over Tolstoy, Yeats and Shaw in favour of Tagore, and I was so heartened and impressed by this that I made a conscious effort to seek out his writings for myself.

Over the years, Tagore's poetry and

prayers have never been too far away. He writes about the ebb and flow of life with passion, depth and beauty. Tragedy struck him so many times during one period of his life that he contemplated suicide, but he pushed through and his writings grew even deeper through these experiences.

He was an educator, a musician and an artist – all paths that I too have explored. But, for me, the most important thing about Tagore was his non-sectarianism.

He came from a Hindu family but recognised Buddha as the greatest human being ever to have lived; he extolled the Sermon on the Mount and translated the poems of Kabir, the mystic seer of Islam. The description of his own Bengali family was of "a confluence of three cultures: Hindu, Mohammedan, and British" and this, too, resonates with me through my own personal experiences in life.

We in the West have moved forward in the last 60 years trying to fulfil Tagore's desire to bring East and West ever closer, and in this Year of Tagore, may we all ever more continue to walk along his path to a deeper understanding of all cultures.

Meron Shapland is a Transpersonal Counsellor, Art therapist and workshop leader. *A Taste of Tagore*, compiled by Meron Shapland, is published by Green Books. ISBN: 9781900322935

INNER DEPTH

Meron Shapland recalls the impact Tagore first had on her when she was a spirited teenager

KINSHIP WITH NATURE

Shanta Acharya welcomes a new English translation that cleverly captures the deep warmth and compassion of Tagore's poetry

I Won't Let You Go: Selected Poems

Rabindranath Tagore

Translated by Ketaki Kushari Dyson

Bloodaxe Books, 2010

ISBN: 9781852248987

Mother and child, by Rabindranath Tagore

The publication of a new and expanded edition of a selection of poems by Rabindranath Tagore, *I Won't Let You Go*, translated into English by Ketaki Kushari Dyson, is a cause for celebration. Tagore is among the greatest poets of modern times and widely recognised as a brilliant, creative genius produced by the Indian Renaissance.

As the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1913, his work has been known to readers worldwide; yet a lack of suitable translations has made the task of appreciating Tagore's remarkable poetic genius difficult. In her Preface to the new edition, Dyson acknowledges her debt to Professor Nemaisadhan Bose, who, when he was Vice Chancellor of Visva-Bharati, persuaded her to undertake the project of translating Tagore.

In a comprehensive Introduction to the first edition, first published in 1991, and in the Notes to the poems, Dyson provides a wealth of biographical, historical and intellectual background to Tagore's writings – including insights into his personal life and his views about the nation-state, the class system and the status of women, as well as the nature of his faith.

Tagore was not a systematic philosopher, but he was of considerable contemporary relevance as a thinker. And Dyson places his achievements in the context of India's "rich, three-dimensional, historical realities" while pointing the reader to his personal vision of the interconnectedness of the universe.

Dyson captures successfully the pulse of Tagore's poetry. As the London Review of Books observes, "Ketaki Kushari Dyson's selection *I Won't Let You Go* perhaps captures more successfully than any other the sensuous Bengaliness of Tagore's works, and the particularity of the weather, both inner and outer, in which the poems exist." The selection of poems aims to bring out the strength – the variety of themes, the richness of language – of Tagore's poetry, which is "characterised by an impressive wholeness of attitude: a loving warmth, a compassionate humanity, a delicate sensuousness, an intense sense of kinship with Nature, a burning awareness of the universe of which we are a part".

Tagore's transcendent yet passionately human vision comes across forcefully in his poems. In his poem, *Earth*, he writes:

"Deep is my desire | in country after country to identify | myself with all men... | ... | Oh, to be a naked barbarian, sturdy, robust, fierce, | neither to duties nor to prohibitions geared, | bound by nothing – neither customs, nor scruples, nor doubts, | nor a sense of mine and thine, nor the fever of thought; | one whose life-flow always rushes unchecked..." The strength of such a point of view is its open-endedness; he is Everyman and more. This sense of the individual Self spilling out to embrace the universal Self reminds us of the Romantic poets in Europe and the American Transcendentalists, as much as the classical Indian poets.

The Earth is a mother whose hands hold not 'infinite riches' but 'unfinished pleasures' (*On Her Powerlessness*). She "clings to all her offspring, saying 'I won't let you go' to the tiniest blade of grass that springs from her womb, and she is as powerless to prevent their departure as Tagore's young daughter is to prevent her father's going away to his place of work," explains Dyson.

It is not possible in a short review to accommodate the multi-faceted treasury of Tagore's writing – he was a brilliant love poet, a poet who wrote about loss and bereavement that sprang from his personal experiences; he was a poet with a keen insight into the psychology of children, and he empathised deeply with the oppressed and with those less fortunate than himself.

Many philosophical and religious strands go into the making of Tagore's world. He absorbed myriad influences and integrated them into his personal vision; his poetry, however, remains 'without labels', recording his spiritual journey that enriches others who can share the effortless ease with which he moves from a tiny detail to the vast cosmos. Tagore was prophetic when he wrote: "A hundred years from today | who are you, sitting, reading a poem of mine, | under curiosity's sway – | a hundred years from today?" A hundred years from now there will still be many reading his work, admiring the man and the culture that nourished such a flowering.

R

Shanta Acharya (www.shantaacharya.com) is the author of five books of poetry.

THE PROFESSOR AND THE POET

Kenny Munro explores the friendship between Scottish visionary Patrick Geddes and Rabindranath Tagore

A Meeting of Two Minds: Geddes Tagore Letters

Bashabi Fraser (ed.)

Word Power Books, 2008

ISBN: 9780954918514

As an ecologist, peace activist and town planner, the Scottish visionary Patrick Geddes planted many seeds, enhancing education and promoting international respect, all of which was given a defining focus by his work across India and his extraordinary friendship with the poet Rabindranath Tagore.

The death of his son, Alasdair, during the First World War, followed by that of his wife, gives some sense of Geddes' emotional strength during that friendship, and of course Tagore himself was no stranger to the grief of losing both a wife and a child. As their friendship grew, Tagore wrote of Geddes: "He has the precision of the scientist and vision of the prophet; and at the same time, the power of the artist to make his ideas visible through the language of symbols".

Philip Boardman, a student of Geddes in Montpellier, France, remarks on the extraordinary relationship of these two men in his book *The Worlds of Patrick Geddes* (published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1978): "Unlike the brief encounter with Gandhi, Geddes achieved lasting friendship and cooperation with the poet Rabindranath Tagore, dating from the Darjeeling Summer Meeting in 1917. Their closest contact, however, was in 1922–3 and concerned [Tagore's] plans for an International University in India. Its purpose was to pave the path to a future when both the East and West will work together for the general cause of human welfare, and its official opening [was] set for January 1923. 'I need not say', the poet wrote already in May 1921, 'that it would help me greatly if you could personally take part in organising it'."

But *A Meeting of Two Minds* reminds us of the superhuman struggle to improve the world through education, both during and after the First World War. The two friends – the poet and the professor – wrote passionately and with conviction of cultural and economic empowerment and set in motion a political momentum which then helped illuminate the path towards self-government for India.

In their exchanges, both men asserted the importance of democratic values and mutual respect within all communities. Delving deeper into some of their correspondence in this book, its author and editor, Bashabi Fraser, reveals many of their underlying plans for the regeneration of rural communities



Image: courtesy Word Power Books

in Bengal, including introducing training opportunities that integrated sustainable agriculture with cottage industries to imbue citizenship and self-sufficiency.

A Bengali now living in Scotland, Fraser and her family have known the Geddes family personally and also, during their formative years in Kolkata, embraced the cultural legacy and philosophy of Tagore. In compiling the book, Fraser, who is a lecturer at Edinburgh Napier University, travelled extensively to access the archives and visit the locations that were important to these two men, including destinations in France, India, Japan and Scotland.

As well as her family's personal link with the Geddes family, Fraser says she was inspired by her own immersion in the guru-shishya ('teacher/disciple') philosophy embraced by both her protagonists, and her current Tagore-related ambition is to establish a Scottish Centre for Tagore Studies.

In *A Meeting of Two Minds* the two men's attention to detail is revealed in many of the letters, which underpin the mood of the time and tell us so much more about the world in the first half of the 20th century. Their correspondence gives us an insight, too, into the evolving collaborative ambitions, roles and exchanges not only with the Geddes family but also with other key figures of the time, including Leonard Elmhirst, C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi and J.C. Bose, to name a few. Great care has clearly been taken with this book, which includes an explanation of the challenges overcome to decipher the material, some of which is published for the first time.

Much was achieved during the lifetimes of Tagore and Geddes, and arguably the symbolic river on which they both travelled continues to inspire and guide us even today. And what this collection of their correspondence so ably shows is that we have much to learn from both these individuals and from their vision to improve the world through education, art and science.

Kenny Munro is a freelance sculptor and educator based in Scotland. He has developed international exchange programmes with Australia, India and France. www.kennymunrosulpture.com

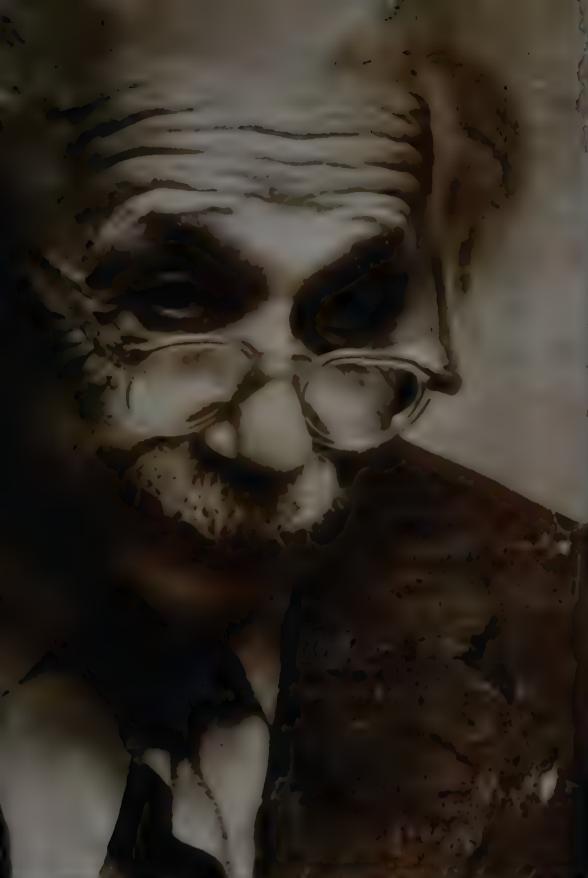


Image: courtesy Palazzo Editions

THE MEANING OF EXISTENCE

Chris Clarke discovers why Tagore and Einstein had so much to talk about

Einstein: A Hundred Years of Relativity

Andrew Robinson et al.

Palazzo Editions, 2010

ISBN: 9780955304699

I know of no other book that presents a better all-round picture of Einstein. Lavishly illustrated with contemporary photographs, it succeeds both in telling his biography and at the same time exploring his impact on the world, focusing first on his physics and later more on the man. At intervals additional chapters by specialists expound particular aspects of the story, almost all of them written very accessibly.

What drives the narrative is the double mystery of Einstein's life. First there is the nature of his genius as a physicist. He created the main planks of the foundation on which all subsequent fundamental physics has been built: the two levels of relativity theory – the special and general theories – and the first form of quantum theory involving packets of energy, later called 'quanta'.

Two of these achievements, moreover, appeared in 1905 at the start of his career, when he was an unknown official in a patents office. Astonishment turns into mystery, however, when one reads about the later period of his life, when "Einstein's three decades of endless calculation after 1925 have left little behind except manuscripts".

Second is the mystery of Einstein's character and his relationships with his fellows. Here was no inaccessible recluse or lofty semi-autistic figure: Einstein comes over as a genial human being, welcoming all visitors and playing a major part, especially in his later years, in establishing organisations for promoting peace. Yet at times he could be almost brutally dismissive to those closest to him. Robert Schulmann, in his chapter Einstein's Love Letters, remarks: "Albert's devotion to

science takes precedence over his emotional commitments. In the final analysis...Einstein cared more about humanity than about individual human beings."

For me, a physicist, it is the first of these mysteries that is the most baffling, and the one on which this book sheds the greatest light. The pivotal moment when the inspiration of the first half of his life started shifting to the apparent sterility of the second part of his life was clearly his rejection of the course taken by quantum theory after 1927. In this year it was realised that 'quanta' were not the essential part of quantum theory, and a revised theory, called 'quantum mechanics', started to form.

An important part of this was 'uncertainty relations': the fact that it was not possible to measure certain pairs of quantities, such as the position and the momentum of an object, with complete accuracy. For example, the more accurately momentum was measured, the less accurately could one measure position.

A debate arose between Einstein, who held that objects always had both a position and a momentum, but it was mechanically impossible to get at both of them at the same time, and Niels Bohr, the leading architect of this new theory, who held that it was "wrong to think that the task of physics is to find out how Nature is. Physics concerns what we can say about Nature."

The debate thus concerned the very meaning of existence. It was for this reason that Einstein's thinking interested Tagore. The physicists of the time, however, opted for Bohr's contrary view, though it was not

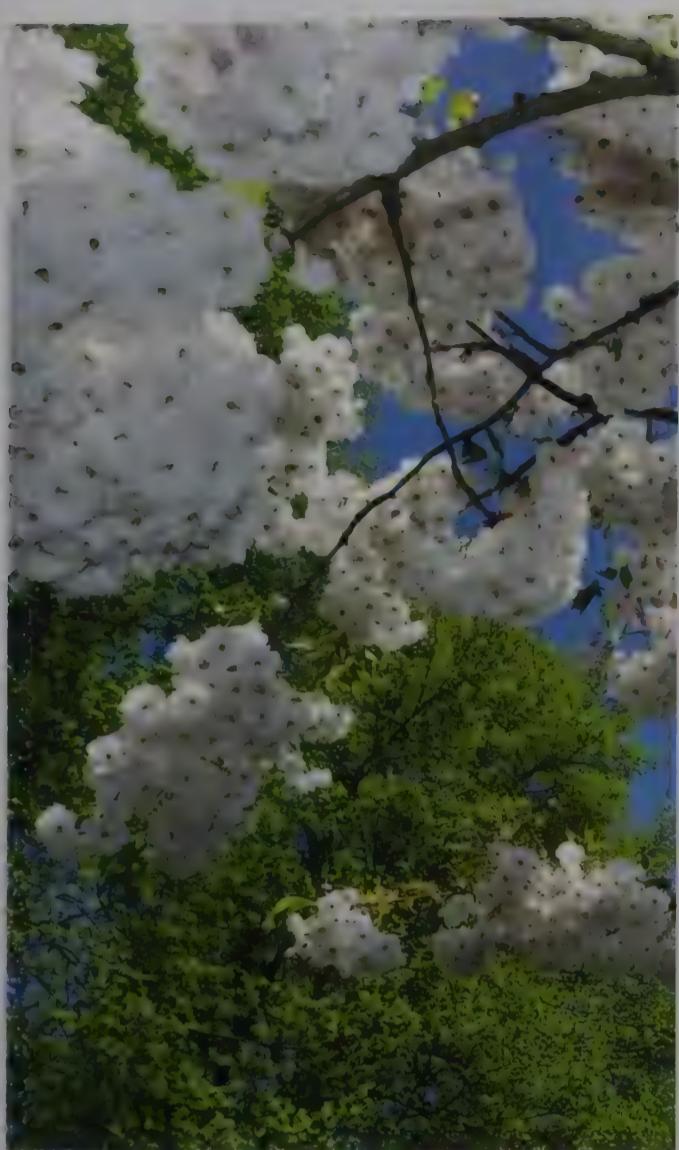
until 1972, long after Einstein's death, that an experiment by Friedman and Clauser confirmed that Bohr had been right.

Back in the 1930s, Einstein increasingly cut himself off from a physics that he felt had taken the wrong course. He was on a quest for an entirely different theory compatible with his vision of reality. His 1930 dialogue with Tagore in Germany (see page 22) took these issues to a new level, starting a debate that has continued to the present day.

This book left me with the impression of a man who was truly free. From childhood he pursued his own way, drawing on physical insights of astounding purity and penetration, which enabled him to revolutionise science. But though the individuality of these gifts let him down in his later work in physics, they continued to serve him in his work for peace, and it was this that was to make him so well known in later life.

In his work promoting peace and justice, Einstein's fame protected him from the arbitrary obstacles and insults so often encountered in this task. For him sacrificial heroism was not required, but he unhesitatingly and cheerfully told the truth to president and floor cleaner alike. As for Einstein's later science, Andrew Robinson reminds us in the words of Max Planck, the 'grandfather' of quantum theory, that perhaps "science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of Nature because in the last analysis we ourselves are part of the mystery we are trying to solve".

Chris Clarke was a professor of Applied Mathematics and now writes on science and spirituality. www.scispirit.com



LEADING BY EXAMPLE

We have a brave visionary at the heart of our national life, writes Rupert Sheldrake

Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World

HRH The Prince of Wales, Tony Juniper and Ian Skelly
HarperCollins, 2010
ISBN: 9780007348039

This is a wonderful book: a remarkable synthesis of holistic thinking and traditional ideas about the interconnectedness of humanity, Nature and God. It is written in the Prince of Wales' own voice and is both prophetic and passionate. It highlights the major problems that face us in the modern world, and points towards solutions, some of which the Prince has himself modelled through his initiatives and foundations.

The Prince's co-authors, Tony Juniper, formerly head of Friends of the Earth, and Ian Skelly, a presenter on BBC Radio 3, are both very well informed and have played an important role in writing the book through their research and discussions with the Prince. The book deals with deep ideas, is factually informative and shows an inside knowledge of the processes of government and international decision-making. It is beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated.

This book most reminds me of Resurgence itself. Many of the themes it discusses are familiar to readers of this magazine; the Prince himself is a regular contributor, as are Juniper and Skelly.

The central theme of Harmony is that the fundamental problems of the modern world, such as the environmental and financial crises, are consequences of a crisis of perception: "It is the way we see the world that is ultimately at fault. If we simply concentrate on fixing the outward problems without paying attention to the central, inner problem, then the deeper problem remains, and we will carry on casting around in the wilderness for the right path without a proper sense of where we took the wrong turning."

Harmony starts with a brief exposition of the philosophical and geometrical principles that inspired the builders of the great masterpieces of sacred architecture, which at the same time reflect how the natural world operates in a healthy state of balance. The Prince stresses that much ancient wisdom came to humanity through revelation, which "comes about when a person practises great humility and achieves a mastery over the ego so that the 'the knower and the known' effectively become one". He quotes an eminent Islamic scholar who described humanity as being given "spiritual insights so that we should understand Nature, know God through his wondrous signs and experience the sublime joy of being in harmony with the infinite".

Throughout the book, the Prince emphasises the need for connection with Nature, mystical insight and tradition. The overall aim is to live in harmony. By contrast, our present course of action is almost the opposite. "It is as if we are sailing on a giant tanker and heading straight for a hurricane. I know well from my time in the Royal Navy that if it were simply a big storm we would be able to sail through it – not a pleasant experience but possible. But at sea you do not sail into hurricanes. You go round them, respecting their immense power to destroy."

The final chapter, Relationship, sums up many of the themes in the book by contrasting knowledge and relationship. In the modern world we are not short of knowledge: we have more than ever before. The missing element is our relationship with Nature, and it is here that we can learn from the remaining First Nation peoples. "The land lives and, as humanity is a part of the land, so the land inhabits man. We are in Earth as we are in Heaven."

The Prince of Wales is not only a deep thinker and a visionary but a man of action too. I have always admired his bravery, but I was unaware of how many excellent activities he encourages until I read David Lorimer's book *Radical Prince: The Practical Vision of the Prince of Wales* (2004), the first integrated account of the philosophy behind those activities. Now, in the Prince's own words, we can see how all these projects hang together. Indeed you can (literally) hear it all in his own voice in the audio version of Harmony.

We are extraordinarily fortunate to have Prince Charles at the heart of our national life. I can think of no other public figure who so inspiring embodies the hopes and values that we need today. He leads by example, campaigning tirelessly and unselfishly for the causes he believes in – which are the causes I believe in myself.

I gave this book to friends and to members of my family for Christmas, and it was much appreciated. I strongly recommend Harmony to readers of Resurgence, not only for themselves but also as a way of passing on to their own friends and family a source of so much insight and inspiration.

Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist and the author of *A New Science of Life*.

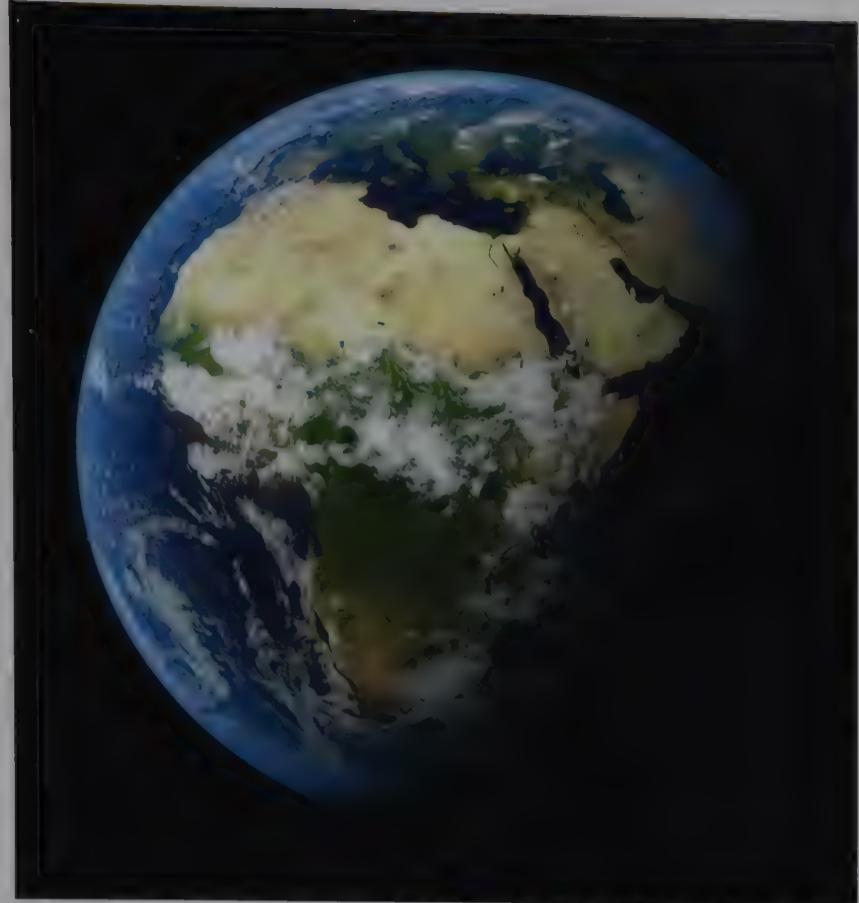


Image: Roger Harris/Science Photo Library

PALE GREEN

Elizabeth Wainwright questions the view of an influential economist

The Plundered Planet: How to Reconcile Prosperity with Nature

Paul Collier

Allen Lane, 2010

ISBN: 9781846142239

In his most recent book, Paul Collier sets out to explore our changing relationship with planet Earth in light of the increasingly political and economic implications of climate change and resource depletion.

Collier commands respect. He was Director of Development Research at the World Bank, and his previous book *The Bottom Billion* was well received. He analyses the desperate underbelly of the world's population, suggesting that international aid is not the way to pull people out of poverty, instead favouring natural assets as the way to do it.

The Bottom Billion made some important points, but I wonder whether the topic that Collier grapples with in *The Plundered Planet* – essentially, how to reconcile the needs of the ever-growing population with a sustainable environmental future – would have been better approached in conjunction with an environmental economist like Partha Dasgupta, or the author of the Stern Review on the economics of climate change, Nicholas Stern.

Collier divides people involved in the Planet vs. Economy debate into two groups: the romantic, backward-looking environmentalists, and the mercenary ostriches with their heads in the sand. Admittedly, Collier says he is trying to close up the middle ground, proclaiming that environmentalists and

economists "need each other". This then, is the premise of *The Plundered Planet*.

Collier explains: "As an economist I have been reared to use the ethical framework of Utilitarianism", with the benchmark for this being "to achieve the greatest happiness of the greatest number". Though in places "the greatest happiness of the private enterprises" seemed more appropriate.

For me the book highlighted a gaping hole in the debate – where is the voice of the global South, whose residents account for 5/6 of the world's population? There is an implication that both environmentalists and economists are Western.

"Ordinary people" can take responsibility for Nature, Collier says. But, he states, we need to slay "our middle-class love affair with peasant agriculture". One could agree that the result of small-scale idyllic organic agriculture is often luxury goods, but Collier extrapolates his point to conclude that subsistence agriculture is "the romantic vision taken to its *reductio ad absurdum*". Large, technologically sophisticated agro-companies are where we should head. There is no need to over-romanticise local self-sufficiency – we seem to have a tendency to do so, and it is not going to change the world – but Collier concludes this seemingly without consulting the planet's bottom billion.

Collier gives practical and well-informed arguments – which also include evangelical trumpeting of GM foods, and slating of biofuels. But again, the lack of voice to the global South is evident. In criticising the GM ban in Europe, Collier argues how African governments followed suit so as not to be shut out of the European markets, concluding, "Africa needs all the help it can get", and that the ban will ultimately damage Africa's ability to feed herself. What he doesn't mention is that African scientists in countries where the ban was recently lifted, including Kenya, are now carrying out their own context-specific GM research. Africa may need help – but that does not necessarily mean from speculating Western economists.

Collier suggests that resources do not need to be a burden if they are properly managed, for example with aid money funding 'prospecting' for resources, and then rights to resources being auctioned, the profits set aside for the future and to fund infrastructure. Auctioning rights to natural assets seems problematic, if not dangerous. He goes back to arguments from *The Bottom Billion* – that governance and corruption are a barrier to this sort of development. In *The Plundered Planet*, he adds environmentalists to the list of barriers.

Green is, in Collier's view, GM crops and nuclear power. He would like the world to invest in the emerging markets rather than worrying about food miles – he explains that it uses less carbon to grow crops in the most favourable climate and then fly them where needed. I'm not sure – I'm not an economist.

But I am a resident of the planet, and for me the book highlighted the need for global dialogue, not more conventional neo-liberal economic debate. It may be a detailed handbook for the likes of economists in the West – and for them I hope it might question business as usual – but it is not a bottom-up guide to reconciling economic prosperity with the limits of Nature.

Elizabeth Wainwright is Resurgence magazine's Deputy Editor. She has an MSc in International Development, and has spent time working in Africa for various organisations.

STORY OF A SPIRITUAL AGNOSTIC

Michael Meacher seeks meaning and purpose in the universe

I will always remember the first time I looked at Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, painted in 1434. At first glance, I dismissed it as rather formalised, the two principal figures stiff and lifeless and a painting with no vitality or special meaning. I was soon put right, and was stunned.

It is in fact an extraordinary painting with exquisite detail that imparts a whole new understanding of what the artist was conveying. The mirror on the wall behind the figures, for example, contains in minute detail a reflection of the whole scene, including the two witnesses to the event (one of them the artist himself), with all the precision of a modern digital photograph. Yet I missed this completely the first time I saw it.

I have now concluded that the same applies to the way we look at the world around us, and the amazing story that science has uncovered about our universe. When I began to really examine this – the cosmology, physics, biochemistry, environmentalism, socio-biology and spirituality that have brought us here and made us what we are – I realised that there were significant nodal points which were easy to pass over, but which, once identified and understood, shed new light over the whole landscape.

We live today in the West in a secular age where the old certainties underpinned by religious dogma and an unquestioning morality have largely faded, to be replaced by consumer materialism in thrall to wealth and celebrity. So I asked myself what do I really believe in? Are our lives simply a temporary rite of passage that soon vanishes with little or no meaning or is there some greater order of things giving meaning to our species? And if so, what is the scientific evidence for this?

I am not someone who has had an overpowering experience leading to an unshakeable inner certainty. Raised as a Christian, my mother wanted me to become

a priest but I opted instead for social work, as a probation officer, before becoming focused on achieving social change through the political process; a shift which took me into Parliament for the next 40 years.

Whilst this choice offered important opportunities to fight for the values I believed in, it gave no respite from puzzling the deeper meaning of human life and what it is ultimately for – if indeed it is 'for' anything.

I have always had a lifelong passion for science and so have read extensively, particularly about cosmology and, given that reality has to be one single indivisible unity, I pondered how it all fitted together. It has always seemed strange to me that some people assert that modern science has 'disproved' religion, since this is clearly wrong –

It's as though we are gradually becoming aware of some cosmic blueprint

science and religion simply reflect two different paradigms of experience, so neither can invalidate the other.

I decided to write my book from the standpoint of the spiritual agnostic – a place that reflects where I think most people in modern society are: namely, uncertain, sceptical and unwilling to make any intellectual or emotional commitment without being shown 'the evidence.'

So, what is the relevant evidence that is available to us?

My book surveys each of the critical dimensions – the origin some 13 billion years ago and evolution of the universe, the formation of the galaxies and our solar system, the possible origins of life on Earth some 4 billion years ago and the subsequent proliferation of exotic life forms leading through a chain of the most unlikely improbabilities to the human species.

I asked myself what we can learn when we look at the sometimes hidden detail

– like searching for the minutiae of the van Eyck painting – that illuminates the whole, bringing it to life? And I found there are indeed patterns drawing the threads together in coherent if often unexpected ways.

The story is an extraordinary one. Less than a century ago Hubble, the American astronomer, discovered that the galaxies were not static (as Newtonian physics had believed), but flying away from each other at incredible speeds. Winding back this process – using the Hubble constant – suggests the universe began in a cataclysmic explosion some 13.7 billion years ago (the so-called Big Bang). But the one scientific fact that sticks out is that the universe has been constructed with mind-boggling precision.

In order to produce this stable universe, the balance between the original outward explosive force at Big Bang and the gravitational forces pulling the galaxies back is precise within an accuracy of one part in one followed by 60 noughts! Mathematician Roger Penrose has calculated the likelihood of the universe being random at one chance in one followed by 123 noughts – a degree of unlikelihood verging on infinity. But whilst the scientific data strongly suggests the universe is designed, to make a simplistic 'leap' from this to a designer God is still not warranted, at least not on the scientific evidence we now have.

The paradox of design, however, is that it is interwoven with constant episodes through which the universe is recycled with unimaginable violence and destructiveness, as in supernova explosions, gamma ray bursts, and collisions of galaxies. The Earth itself was pummelled by massive bombardments for some 200 million years after it was formed 4.5 billion years ago, and there have been at least six, perhaps even ten, mass extinctions in Earth's history.

The moon was formed when an asteroid



Image: Dr Keith Wheeler/Science Photo Library

the size of Mars crashed into the Earth at 25,000 miles an hour, with a force equal to some 50,000 trillion Hiroshima atomic bombs. But, paradoxically again, this gigantic cataclysm was the bearer of critical conditions for life on Earth: the axial tilt, the modulated climate, the slowed rotation (so there are no winds at 200 miles an hour), and a very powerful magnetic field warding off lethal cosmic rays.

The evolution of life forms on Earth is equally puzzling. The conventional picture of the smooth upward linear enhancement from primeval mammal to modern man could hardly be more wrong. Life (however it began) would never have proceeded at all without a whole series of unpredictable environmental conditions, including photosynthesis, an enormous rise in the incidence of oxygen, and the advance from prokaryotic to eukaryotic cells.

Proto-mammals, the ancestors of humans, were all but wiped out in the Permian mega-catastrophe 251 million years ago. They just survived, but then lost out to their semi-reptilian competitors, which were then displaced by the dinosaurs, which dominated the world for 165 million years before they too were wiped out by the asteroid strike off the Gulf of Mexico 65 million years ago.

This might suggest a universe that is purposeless and devoid of any overall meaning. However, look closely again and a rather different picture emerges.

Consistent with this free play of natural forces of unbelievable power and violence at the macro level, there is much subtler evidence of detectable and positive patterns of activity at the micro level. There is growing evidence of a natural process whereby at certain thresholds of complexity matter and energy are transposed spontaneously into new higher organisational states not derivable from lower-level laws. This is very different from neo-Darwinian theory, which does not predict increased complexity, but only gene reshuffling through blind, pitiless chance.

Nor is this just a function of biological systems. New evidence is being discovered of this transition to a qualitatively different order of organisation in cosmological systems as well. It is a remarkable new finding that spiral galaxies display autocatalytic cycles of energy and matter just like those that underlie the ecology of the biosphere. It's as though we are gradually becoming aware of some cosmic blueprint.

We need to be careful, however, about what all this means. The evidence in favour of the universe being designed is very strong, but that does not automatically equate with a personal God. For that, a different set of criteria is necessary.

Religious experience is validated, not by scientific verification, but from quite separate sources: the awesome sense of numinous power found almost universally

in human societies, the revelations proclaimed by the founders and prophets of the world's great religions, the ineffable witness of the mystics, and the authenticity of overpowering personal experience which transforms lives. For all that, the narrative of the universe and the link with religious experience often seem contradictory – a mystery we can still only dimly penetrate.

For three centuries science has progressively narrowed the significance of humans against the almost infinite backdrop of the universe, and maybe an almost endless series of universes. It seems odd to attach much importance to a species – ours – that lives on a planet within the solar system of one mainstream star in a galaxy that contains some 200 billion similar stars within a universe that contains perhaps 100 billion other galaxies. It seems odd, too, to design a world for humans in a way that leaves the species off the stage until the last 0.0006% of the time of the near-14-billion-year (so far) performance.

Yet the evidence is pointing now to an ultimate reality, certainly not of the human race as the summit of evolution, but of an overarching cosmic plan of which we may well be a key part.

Michael Meacher is a Labour MP and author of *Destination of the Species: The Riddle of Human Existence* (O Books, 2010, ISBN: 9781846942631).
www.michaelmeacher.info

Dance of Life

Victoria Whelan finds that Tagore was a man ahead of his time

When I applied for this position as Producer of the Tagore Festival, I didn't know who Rabindranath Tagore was. I didn't know he was the inspiration behind Dartington; or that if it weren't for Tagore and the subsequent impact of Dartington on the South West region, it would not be either as creative or as green in its outlook.

In fact, if it weren't for Tagore, I would not even be living here. Many years ago, whilst living on the coast in tropical Australia, I met a number of fellow artists who had travelled from Devon. I was touched by something intangible, something authentic; and so I too travelled to where they had come from; towards a spirit and community I longed for.

So who is this man who has had such an impact on my life?

As the producer of the Tagore Festival it became my job to learn more about Tagore – and what a great job it has been. Initially I read his Nobel Prize award-winning book *Gitanjali* or Song Offering. Perfect, I thought: service and art, together. I remembered how, when I first trained in theatre, one of my teachers had described performance as an act of generosity and service. This insight, which had always helped guide me, was reflected in Tagore's life's work too.

So I learned that I can trust him and his wisdom. Then, as more doors opened, I found myself with more questions about the man and his work. One of the first questions was who had translated Tagore's writings. This is important because the translator will have their own perspective on his work. And when was it translated? Important because language too changes over time.

I wondered if Tagore could be reincarnated today, who would he be? What if he came back as a rapper in a poverty-stricken slum, how would he now

reflect the beauty of life? As I researched more into the man, his art and his ideals, I realised he was very much a man ahead of his time. And I wonder what he would think about our lives now.

Tagore was a man of action and creativity: he sang, wrote, painted and saw the world, perhaps, like a wonderful stage where all things were possible. So at this Tagore Festival we celebrate a great

If it weren't for Tagore, I wouldn't be living here

man. We celebrate action and art that are part of living an inspired 'green' and creative life; a dance of life that enlivens the mundane and reframes the everyday as a glorious opportunity to be seized and cherished.

Victoria Whelan is the producer of the Tagore Festival: www.tagorefestival.com

Tagore and Dartington – An Exhibition

Andy Christian admits that curating the work of a poet eight times as prolific as Milton was something of a challenge

In the preface to his book on Rabindranath Tagore, Edward Thompson noted: "Milton's English verse is less than 18,000 lines. Tagore's published verse and drama amounts to 150,000 lines or their equivalent". From then on I knew I was in for a challenge.

I have read quite widely, seen many of Tagore's paintings and drawings both in the UK and in India, and trawled the archives at Dartington. And as I have done so, something of this great Indian polymath has emerged. His relationship with Leonard Elmhirst is the clearest.

Leonard was inclined to treat Tagore as a great sage and often addressed him as 'Gurudev', though there is no suggestion that Tagore courted such a form of address. Dorothy was a generous benefactor and friend but chose to keep herself slightly apart

from the close bond that Leonard and Tagore had developed.

Dorothy brought to Dartington her love of the arts, her deep social conscience and her devotion to Nature and free education. Leonard brought his determination to experiment with farming, rural industries and the science of the land. Tagore visited and encouraged them, and his own words and works were a continuing influence.

Tagore was a catalyst for Dartington, and he, Dorothy and Leonard would all three have been delighted that they continue to inspire imaginations and set dreams running to make the world a more equitable place. As I put together the fragments of this exhibition, it is clear to me that each of them continues to achieve that.

Andy Christian is a writer and arts consultant.



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Beautiful Wales

Photo: elgol/stockphoto.com

The Welsh Resurgence Group was formed after the wonderful 2010 Resurgence summer retreat to nurture, inspire and connect us in beautiful Wales, as we realised there were enough of us to start a group, writes Lucy Baird.

We have been sharing beautiful skills; we have made some exquisite pottery bowls and written some lovely poems and we are now excited about the

prospects for further soul-nurturing activities such as making music and tai chi. We have also enjoyed a wonderful group walk in Snowdonia, which was magical.

We understand how important it is to 'water our inner garden' with community and have thoroughly enjoyed our meetings, sharing wholesome food and stories, and we are all keen to continue. It would be wonderful if more people

joined the Welsh Gaia Group, where we nurture our souls with Soil, Soul and Society, celebrating music, poetry, art, community, food and the Earth.

If you are interested in joining this group, contact Lucy Baird: luciarose@gmail.com or tel. 07850 143737.

For information on the 2011 Resurgence Summer Camp, see page 71

DIRECTORY OF RESURGENCE GROUPS

Resurgence readers' opportunity to meet together in local groups, sharing meditation, ideas, an eco-friendly way of life, and seasonal food. For more information on local groups across the UK, or to start your own group, contact Jeanette Gill: members@resurgence.org 01208 841824

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Contact: Abdul Al-Seffar 0121 426 2606
alseffar@googlemail.com

Meeting 3–4 times a year

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Contact: Christina 01297 23822
tinabows@hotmail.com

Monthly at The Spiral Sanctuary, Seaton

Hampshire

Contact: Sue Routner 02380 620468
sroutner@yahoo.co.uk

Bi-monthly at The Swan Centre in Eastleigh

Leeds

David Midgley
david@schumacher-north.co.uk

Bi-monthly meetings

North Cornwall

Contact: Simon Mitchell 01208 851356
simonthescribe@yahoo.co.uk

Bi-monthly meetings at St Beward

Wales – Newtown area

Contact: Lucy Baird 07850 143737
luciarose@gmail.com

See article above.

Welsh Borders

Contact: Elaine 01981 550246
elaine@gaiapartnership.org

Near Hay on Wye, 6.30pm, quarterly

Whitley Bay Group

Contact: Margaret 0191 290 1516
margaretlevans.wb@gmail.com

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Contact: Galeo Saintz +27 (0) 82 888 8181
galeo@galeosaintz.com

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SUPPORTING GROUPS

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Contact: Paul Sandford Tel. 07767 075490
paulsandford28@yahoo.co.uk

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Contact: Annemarie Borg

amb@annemarieborg.com

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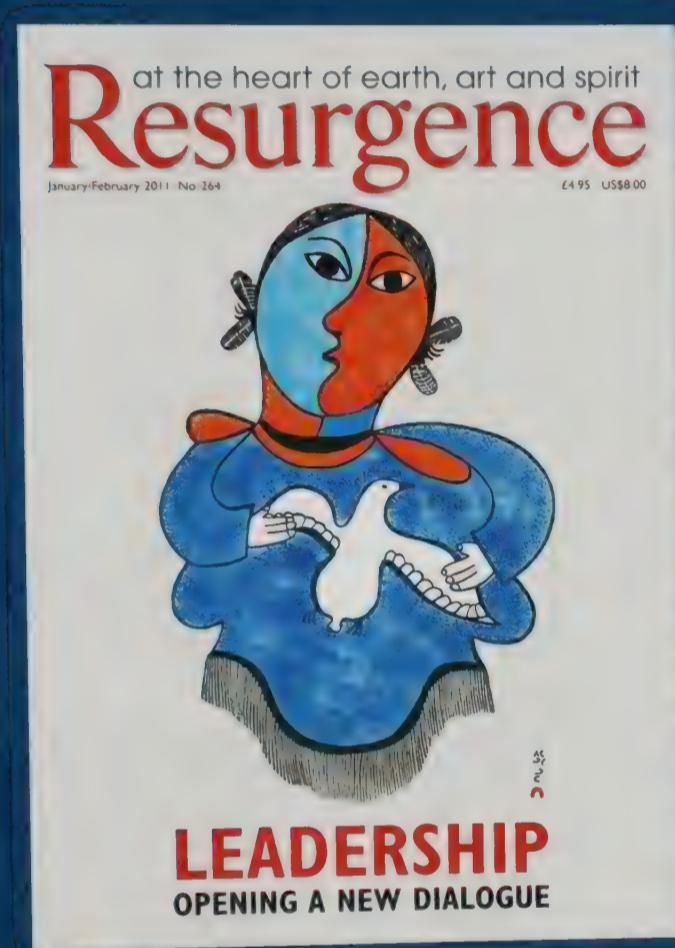
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Proofreading and copy-editing by a member of the Resurgence team. Reliable, friendly service. Helen Banks 01726 823998 helenbanks@phonecoop.coop

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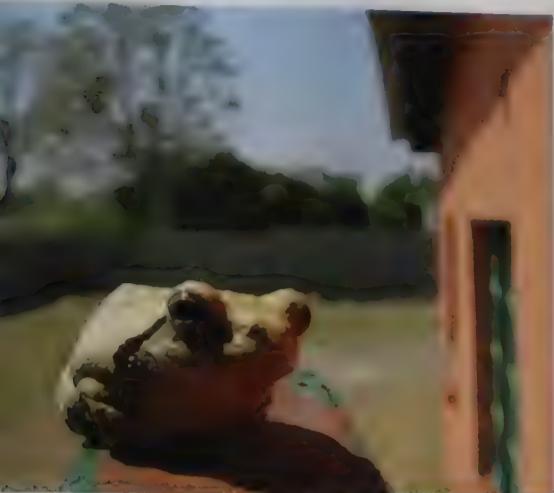
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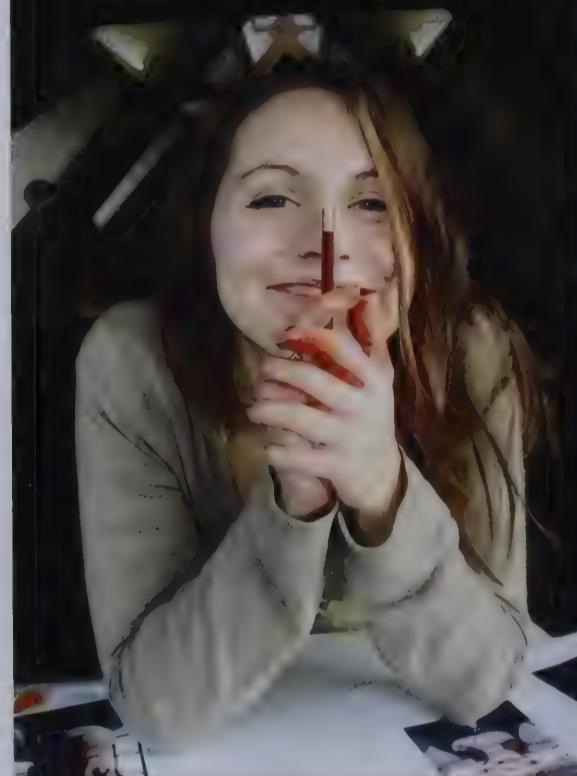
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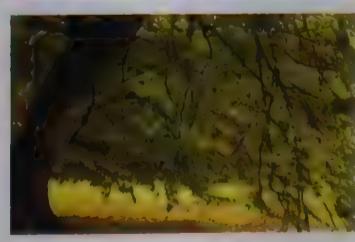
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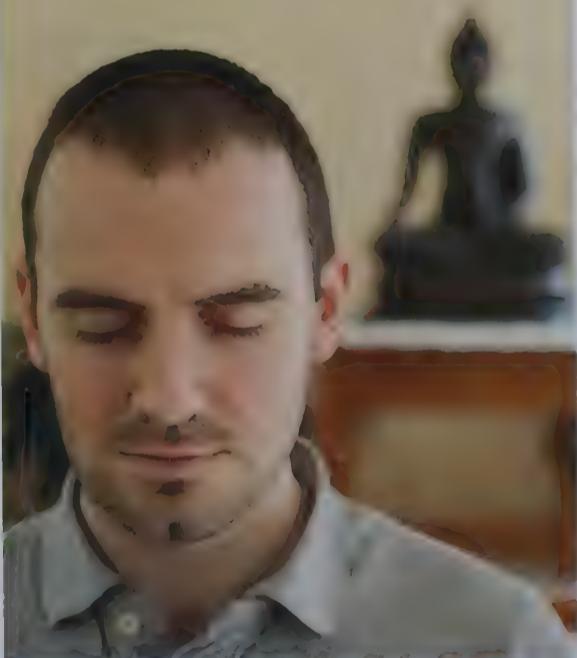
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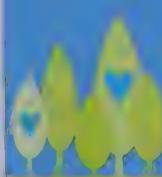
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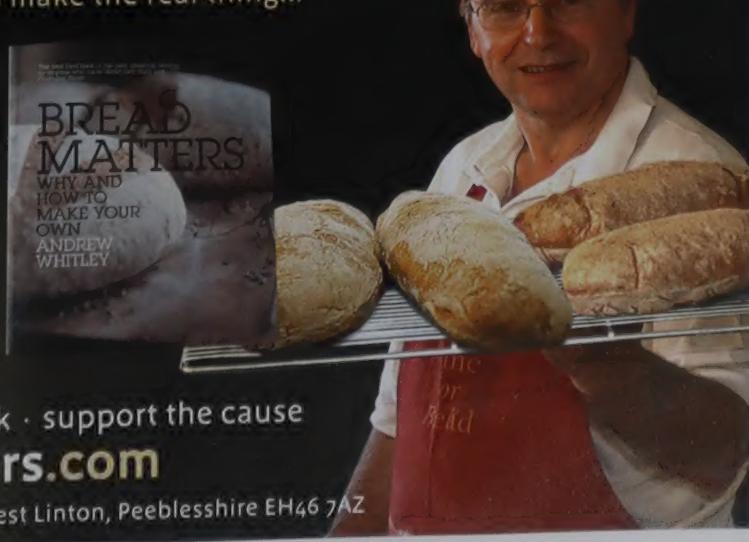
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Teachers: Vandana Shiva, Mark Tully, Krishna Dutta, William Radice, Satish Kumar

Earth Pilgrim: Exploring the Landscape of Spirit

July 4 – 9, 2011

During this course, Satish will share his thoughts on the importance of bringing soul into the heart of everything we do, and how this can enhance our creativity and our work for sustainability and peace. On Dartmoor, participants will visit with Satish some of the landscapes pictured in the Earth Pilgrim documentary – woods, rivers, tors, stone circles, and the open moor – walking together, talking, sitting quietly and reflecting individually and as a group.

Teacher: Satish Kumar, Stephan Harding and Alastair McIntosh

Practising Resourcefulness: Plenty, Sustainability and Well-being in Everyday Life

May 31 – June 4, 2011

How much is enough? This question has never been more relevant or important than it is today, and Vicki Robin has been at the forefront of these issues ever since the publication of her seminal work *Your Money or Your Life?* During this course she will work with participants to find joyful ways of living at your “enough point” – the point where you have all you need and nothing in excess.

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